Nathan Bangs,
Seth Williston

A vindication. A Sermon

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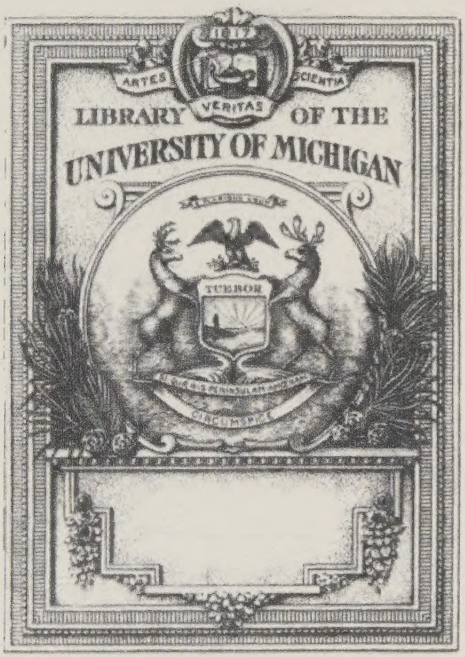

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A

VINDICATION,

OF SOME OF THE

MOST ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES OF THE REFORMATION:

BEING A REPLY TO OBJECTIONS RAISED AGAINST THESE DOCTRINES IN A LATE PUBLICATION, ENTITLED,

"THE ERRORS OF HOPKINSIANISM DETECTED AND REFUTED;

IN SIX LETTERS,

By NATHAN BANGS,
Minister of the Gospel;"

ADDRESSED TO THE AUTHOR OF THE PRESENT WORK.

To which is added

A SERMON,

ON THE GOODNESS OF GOD,

MANIFESTED IN GOVERNING THE HEARTS OF HIS ENEMIES.

By SETH WILLISTON,
Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Durham, N. Y.

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

HUDSON, N. Y.
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1817.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IT is now more than a year and a half, since I received the Letters of Mr. Bangs. The religious public had a right to expect that if an answer were attempted, it would have been out at an earlier period. One reason of the delay has been this: On first reading the Letters, it was my purpose, if I made a reply, to publish in connexion with it a concise Harmony of *divine truth*; a contemplated work, which had lain with weight on my mind for several years. I finally entered upon, and went through the outlines of the Harmony, and had made some advances in my reply to Mr. B's. objections, before I relinquished my original plan of connecting the two together. As my friends had been made acquainted with my original plan, I feel myself under obligation to give them my reasons for relinquishing it. My reasons were two: One was this; that considering my many interruptions in study, I saw that if both of the contemplated works were published together, it would be the means of a still further delay of the publication of the present work, which, being designed as a reply to a book that was now in the hands of the public, had been already delayed too long. The other reason was; that as my work was multiplying in my hands, beyond my first calculation, it was thought, that if both objects were to be included in one book, it would render it too expensive for the present period of pecuniary embarrassment. If the Vindication, which is now issued from the press, should meet the approbation of my friends, and of the public; and should they manifest a desire to see the author's attempt to *harmonize* divine truth, they may yet be gratified, if it should please the Lord to spare his life. Let them be reminded, that their prayers may be the means of rendering the contemplated work more perfect and useful, than it would otherwise be. "Brethren, pray for us." The prayers of the righteous avail much.

July 11, 1817,

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INTRODUCTION.

PERHAPS some of my christian brethren would say, if they knew for what purpose I have now taken up my pen, "Do let contention alone: There are other things of more importance to engage the attention of the ministers of Christ at such a day as this." I view this to be truly an extraordinary day, a day in which there is an opportunity and a call, to do much in the vineyard of our Lord. The command of the risen Saviour now comes with accumulated weight upon his disciples, "Go and teach all nations." It is matter of joy that the disciples of Jesus begin to feel the force of the command. That they do begin to have feeling, is manifest by the increasing number of benevolent institutions which are formed and supported, with a view to diffuse abroad the knowledge of the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. We ought to be thankful that the Lord of the harvest is raising up, and furnishing men, for the missionary work, and disposing them to go, if needful, even to the ends of the earth. But Christ has not designed all his ministers for missionaries. Neither is all the work of the present day to be done in Asia and Africa. There are different ways in which we may be instrumental of hastening the latter day glory of the church. Every one has his place in which to work, and every one is loudly called upon to be up and doing. The Millennium will differ from all other periods of the world by the triumph of truth. Then will that prediction be most eminently fulfilled; "*Truth* shall spring out of the earth, Psal. lxxxv. 11. A religion founded upon divine truth, and conformable to it, shall then universally prevail.

But is not this one of the mountains, which stand in the way of the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the propagation of the truth, that the *christian church* is not agreed about the answer to this most important question, What is truth? and the watchmen do not see eye to eye, nor lift up their voice together.

It is true, we all agree that the scriptures are the standard. So that we can unite in sending the bible among pagan idolators and deluded Mahometans. But if the Pagan, or the Mahometan, should be asked, as the Ethiopean eunuch was, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" he might very probably answer, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" Living teachers have always been used in propagating the gospel; and we have no reason to expect that the chief Shepherd will now dispense with the use of them. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" But will it not be calculated to hinder the progress of the gospel among the heathen, when the living teachers materially differ in their manner of explaining the written word?

Here are three books now before me; one is the bible, the other two were written, the one by myself, the other by Mr. Nathan Bangs. We both call ourselves *ministers of the gospel.* We both professedly say, the bible is divine truth, every syllable of it; and that it is an infallible standard, because it is the word of the living God. We both profess to agree in saying, that this is the source from which we are to learn what *to believe*, and what *to do*; what is truth, and what is duty. After having repeatedly and attentively read through the holy scriptures, I expressed in my sermons, what appeared to me, a scriptural view of some of the leading doctrines of the gospel. Mr. Bangs has read my book, and says, "I think myself bound to enter a public protest against what are deemed the dangerous errors advanced in your sermons." page 14. Further on, he says; "If any man had set himself to work on purpose to blacken the character of God by the most vile misrepresentations, he could not have done it more effectually than you have done, I hope undesignedly, in your sermons, especially the first and third." page 30. From these quotations, and what is urged all the way through the Letters, it is evident, that our views of the bible are very different; even so different, that the character which I took to be the most glorious and amiable in the universe, even the character of the Holy One of Israel, my opponent, who is also a teacher of

religion, says he thinks, is the most vile character which can be invented. Now, if I still believe that the character which I ascribed to God was his true character and the one in which he glories, ought I not to show that I have still to speak in God's behalf, and ascribe righteousness to my Maker?

If my own heart deceive me not, it is not a contentious spirit which leads me to keep up this controversy. Nor do I think it is for the sake of vindicating *myself* that I now write. Mr. B's letters have neither made me angry, nor excited a spirit of revenge. If I have not mistaken my feelings, a contrary effect has been produced, even the enlarging of my desires for his eternal happiness. I pray God, that I may not lose sight of this, in the strictures which I am now about to write on his book. I desire to have no controversy with my antagonist as *a man*, but only as *an author*; and even here, only where I view him as deviating, not from my sermons, but from a more infallable standard.

Mr. Bangs agrees with me in this, that the points concerning which we differ, are of *great consequence*. He says, "Respecting the subjects of this investigation, I consider them some of the most important doctrines of the gospel; and therefore it is not a matter of indifference which system is embraced," page 6, Preface. To this statement I perfectly agree. These doctrines may be considered as the *shibboleth*, to determine orthodoxy. He who has a right conception of these doctrines concerning which our controversy exists, cannot be very heterodox; and he, who has wrong views of these doctrines, can hardly be considered as believing truth enough to denominate him orthodox.

Believing as I do concerning these doctrines, I cannot view Mr. B's. sentiments as harmless. The scripture teaches us, that the unrenewed mind is in such a state, as not to be pleased with God. The character of God is expressed in the doctrines of his word. These doctrines must therefore be unpalatable to the unrenewed heart. Now, let these doctrines be essentially altered, and it tends to reconcile the sinner, considered as a *sinner*, to God. Let the divine character be changed, and the sinner's heart will not need a change. If therefore I have represented the divine character as es-

sentially different from what it is, the tendency has probably been, to make wicked men feel as if they approved of this character. If on the other hand, it is my antagonist who has essentially changed the divine character, it is his doctrine which will prevent the wicked from discovering their enmity against God.

I wish to impress the mind of the reader with the great importance of his coming to the knowledge of the truth, and of his receiving the truth in the love of it. I do not wish him to receive a single sentiment upon the authority of the writer. The bible lies before him as well as before me. By this holy book we are both to be tried in the great day. But I would entreat my reader, not to make his feelings the test of truth; for what if they should be the feelings of the carnal mind which is enmity against God? Having made these prefatory remarks, I shall now proceed to vindicate the doctrines held forth in the Sermons; in doing which I shall attempt to reply to the most material objections, raised against these doctrines, by Mr. Bangs in his Six Letters addressed to me, with a design to detect and refute the errors of Hopkinsianism.*

* Mr. Bangs has stiled his book, "The Errors of *Hopkinsianism*, detected and refuted." I believe there is very little to be found in my Sermons but what will agree with the writings of many who have been called Calvinists, ever since the time of Calvin. As for Dr. *Hopkins*, I am willing to say, that I have a great esteem for his character and writings; but I think I have not made him, or Calvin, or any other man, or number of men, my standard, though Mr B. thinks I was afraid that my readers would suspect that I did not implicitly follow Dr. Hopkins and others. Page 53. I am not disposed unnecessarily to multiply names, which have a tendency to separate very friends; I shall therefore at present rank myself with those who have been long known in the christian world by the name of *Calvinists*.

A VINDICATION

OF SOME OF THE

Most Essential Doctrines, &c.

SECTION I.

A VINDICATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE DECREES; BEING A REPLY TO OBJECTIONS RAISED AGAINST THIS DOCTRINE IN MR. BANGS' FIRST LETTER.

MR. BANGS' First Letter is designed to detect what he deemed to be the errors of my first sermon. It was the object of this sermon to establish the doctrine of Divine Decrees. The text which was taken to lay a foundation for this doctrine, was Ephesians i. 11—*Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.* If I did not misinterpret my text, it must support the doctrine of *Decrees*. We have now an opportunity of comparing the explanation there given, with one which has since been given in the Letters. Indeed it is difficult to find out how my antagonist understands this text. He does not pretend to dispute but that the relative, "Who," in the beginning of the text, refers to God; so that we must both be agreed in this, that it is *God* who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. But the author of the Letters declares, "The text says nothing about 'bringing every thing to pass which is brought to pass.' It simply states that *he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.* The question to be determined is, What is the counsel of his will?" Page 15. We expected to see this question immediately determined, but do not find it again

taken up until we arrive at page 48, where he says, "As we know of *no other counsel* than that revealed in the bible, we think ourselves justifiable in believing it contrary to God's will for man to sin, because such is the revelation which he has given of his will throughout the whole scriptures. As then the counsel of his will is always according to justice, holiness, &c." Here then it is evident, that Mr. B. means to say, that the *counsel of God's will*, in the text, is the same as his revealed will; or that will of God which forbids us to sin; or in other words, his holy commandments. The will of God, is no doubt frequently used in such a sense as to be synonymous with his commands. When we are said to do the will of God, it is the same as to obey his commands. Thus Christ distinguishes the real christian from the mere professor, by his doing the will of his Father. Mat. vii. 21. Whenever we are required to do the will of God, it must mean obedience to the divine commands. But the text does not speak of the *obedience of men*, but of God's own operations. It is God who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. This certainly cannot mean, that all men do the will of God, i. e. that they all obey him; for this is contrary to fact: Nor does it mean that God worketh the spirit of obedience in all men, for then all men would have an obedient spirit. What then can it mean? Does it mean that God obeys all his own commandments? We have no doubt but that he ever possesses the same holiness which he requires of his creatures. His will is always holy. He has not two characters, the one a benevolent, and the other a malicious character: But is this the specific idea contained in the text, viz. That God always acts in the spirit of his own requirements? Suppose we were to confine the text to the creation of the world, and say, *The Creator wrought all things after the counsel of his own will;* would not every reader understand the words according to the explanation given in the sermon under consideration? Would he not understand such a declaration to mean, that God brought the whole world, and every part of it, into existence according to his own mind, or according to the wise and perfect plan of a world, which existed in his own mind antecedently to its being produced into actual existence?

Is it not evident that a different interpretation of the passage is resorted to, because the "all things," cannot be limited to the work of creation?

I shall now proceed to suggest several reasons which induce me still to believe, that I did not give a wrong explanation of the text; and that it does mean, *That God brings to pass every thing which is brought to pass, according to a plan, or scheme, devised by his own mind.*

I. The context favors this, rather than the explanation given by Mr. B. The text is the last part of the verse; "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the *purpose* of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." After the apostle had spoken of their predestination to such a blessed inheritance, as being according to the purpose of God, it was natural to protract the idea, and show, that God was doing every thing else according to his purpose, or the counsel of his own will. In the verse but one before the text, the apostle speaks of that which God *purposed in himself.* This is what we mean by the decrees of God, namely, *The thing which he hath purposed in himself. The commands* he has revealed, and these are the only rule to regulate our conduct: but the *purpose* which he hath purposed in himself, is the rule by which he regulates his own conduct. His conduct is all holy, and of course, in the spirit of his commands, his purposes relate to the particular ways which he sees it will be fit and proper for him, to display his glory.

II. Another reason why I am inclined still to adhere to the doctrine which was raised from the text is this; that I cannot think my antagonist has done away the force of those passages which were called in to confirm that doctrine. One of these texts, and the first which he notices, is Luke xxii 22. *And truly the son of man goeth as it was determined; but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed.* This passage was introduced to show, that the manner of Christ's falling into the hands of his enemies by the treachery of Judas, was according to the determination of God. Mr. B. supposes that this determination refers either to Judas or the Jewish Sanhedrim. See page 32, 33. In a note he has a criticism on the Greek word which is translated, *determined.*—

He says, it is a participle of the *present* or *imperfect tense*, or *paulo post futurum*, and may be rendered, *determining*, or *about to determine*. This is quite a mistake, though I would by no means conclude an intentional one. The Greek participle, *Oriemenon*, is in the passive voice, and can be found neither in the *present*, nor *imperfect*, nor in the *paulo post futurum*. It can be found no where but in the perfect and pluperfect tense. So that all the force of the criticism is lost, and the mere English reader obtains a correct idea of the passage. At least he will be convinced, that it does not refer to what Judas and the Sanhedrim were determining, or about to determine, by only comparing this with its parallel passages in the other Evangelists. See Mat. xxvi. 24: Mark xiv. 21: John xiii. 18. Matthew and Mark say, The Son of man goeth as *it is written* of him. It is not natural to suppose that this means, As it was writing, or about to be written by Judas. The quotation in John makes it evident, that one place where this had been written was Psal. xli. 9. By comparing all the Evangelists, we learn this important truth, That whatever thing was written in the word of God, as certainly future, was also *determined*. I shall suggest one more thing which is calculated to establish the interpretation which I before gave of this passage;—the other part of the verse requires such an interpretation. The idea which lies upon the face of the text, seems plainly to be this; That though it is true, that Christ is coming to his end, just as God saw it would be best, and just as he determined; yet no thanks to Judas; his treachery is infinitely vile, and will prove his utter ruin. Is it not manifest, that the treachery of Judas was divinely determined? And if this was divinely determined, then there can be no weight in what is urged against the doctrine of a divine purpose in every thing. The reason why the author of the Letters would wish this determination to apply to Judas, rather than to God, is this; that if it be referred to God, it will in his view impeach His character by transferring to Him the guilt of all the treacherous conduct of Judas. So *he* views it: but that he ought not so to view it, I shall hereafter attempt to show. At present I would only observe, if this determination be referred to Judas, so as to preclude any

divine determination in the matter, it will take from God all the glory of the whole work of saving sinners by the death of his Son; for according to the sentiments we oppose, he never determined that his Son should be betrayed and crucified. Did God merely foresee that Judas and the wicked Jews would determine to crucify his Son? Does this comport with the language of the prophet? "Yet it pleased the *Lord* to bruise him, he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." Does it comport with the language of the apostle Peter, Acts ii, 23. *Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God?*

This is the next scripture proof which our author seeks to take from us. But has he actually taken it from us? Does it not remain an unanswerable proof of the fixed purpose of God, that Jesus should be put to death just as he was? How expressive the language: "Him being delivered by the *determinate counsel.*" Apply this language to his illustration of it, by supposing that Gen. Washington foretold that faction would arise in the United States. Would it be proper to say, that these factions took place by the determinate counsel of Gen. Washington? Mr. B. says, "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge do not refer to his being crucified and slain." page 36. I answer, this is evidently the very thing referred to. Peter meant to take the same method in reasoning with the Jews, which Christ took with the disciples going to Emmaus. He designed to show that it was necessary, that Christ should suffer these things which he had suffered. And as Joseph told his brethren, that what God meant for good, they meant for evil, so Peter told them, they had done it with wicked hands.

That striking passage Act iv. 27, 28. Mr. B. seeks to force out of our hands, by the power of criticism. *For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.* This passage he wishes to transpose in such a manner as to make it say, that Jesus was anointed to do whatsoever the hand and counsel of God

determined before to be done, instead of Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles, and people of Israel's doing what his counsel had determined. But why did he need to resort to this transposition of the text? While he was seeking to get rid of the proper force the last passage, (Acts ii. 23,) he resorted to foreknowledge as the ground work of divine determinations. See page 34, 35. If God's *determinate counsel* concerning Christ's crucifixion, in the second chapter, was founded on this foreknowledge of the wickedness of Judas and the Jews, why does he not let the present text stand as it does in our translation, and say; That God's hand and counsel's determining before, what all these bad characters should do, means no more than that he *forcsaw* what they would do? But I have one or two objections to make against his criticism; 1. I believe that every Greek scholar who does not feel an interest in transposing the words, will say, it is more natural to read them in the order in which we find them. 2. The transposition proposed, evidently makes these devout worshippers lose the object of the quotation which in their address to God they had just made from the second Psalm — They tell God, that by the mouth of David he had said, "Why did the heathen rage and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. *For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, &c.*" In the passage, which they introduced in prayer, it is foretold what would be *done to* or against Jesus, the Lord's Christ, and not what he would *himself do.* After they have quoted the passage in which it is predicted what the kings and nobles of the earth would do against the Lord and against his Christ, they proceed to apply it to what Herod and Pilate and others did to Jesus, by saying, "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, &c."

We cannot leave this text without making this remark; That the apostles considered the predictions of the Old Testament, not as things merely foreseen by the prescience of the Deity, but as things which his hand and counsel had determined before to be done. And this view they had of it, even when the things predicted were to be brought to pass by wicked agents,

such as Judas, Herod, Pontius Pilate, and other similar characters.

Since Mr. Bangs has said so much, both in the public Debate, and in his Letters, against the necessity of Christ's crucifixion, I feel myself bound to take some further notice of this highly important event. Mr. B. from p. 36th to 47th, is laboring more or less to prove, that there was no *plan* of God which made it necessary that Christ should be *crucified;* or that he should, in any other way *be put* to death. To do away the necessity of his being crucified, or in any other way put to death, he proceeds to show, that he did not die by crucifixion, or by any device of wicked men. Speaking of the death of Christ, he says; "But if miraculous, as it certainly was, he did not die by crucifixion." p. 45. He then adds; "And this is farther evident from his own words, *I lay down my life—I have power to lay it down. and I have power to take it again:* And after having sufficiently suffered to answer *the wonderful design of love*; it is said, *He gave up the ghost*, or *dismissed the spirit.*" I would reply to the last thing first: If the phrase, *he gave up the ghost*, prove, that Christ did not die by crucifixion, but in a miraculous way, it would also prove, that Abraham and Ishmael died miraculously, by "dismissing the spirit;" for it is said of them, that they *gave up the ghost.* See Gen. xxv. 8, 17. As to what the Saviour said about laying down his life himself, and that no man took it from him, I do not see how we can well mistake his meaning. He undoubtedly meant to say, that, as the Divine Mediator, he was perfectly superior to his enemies. When they came to apprehend him, and Peter drew his sword in defence of his Master, he said to Peter, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, *that thus it must be?*" Mr. B. communicates the sentiment, if I understand him aright, (and it is not my design to misunderstand him,) that it was not necessary it should *thus be.* Ought we to understand the Saviour to say, that men would not actually be the instruments to take his life away; or only, that it would be through his voluntarily submitting to it? Christ was *obedient unto death*, even

the death of the cross. That he was a voluntary sacrifice is evident, and it is no less evident, that wicked men were the instruments of his death—nor is it any less evident, that in doing this, they did what the hand and counsel of God before determined to be done.

Now if we can show that wicked men did *put Christ to death*, and that God's plan of saving sinners could not have been accomplished without it, the doctrine of *divine decrees* will need no other support. In proof of Christ's dying by violent means, I shall make a few quotations. "*Being put to death* in the flesh:" 1 Pet. iii. 18. This text is phrased in such a manner as to give the idea of the passivity of his death, or that "his life *was taken* from the earth." Peter says, Acts, ii. 23. "*Ye* have taken, and by wicked hands have *crucified* and *slain*." In chap. v. 30, he says, "Whom *ye slew* and hanged on a tree:" and chap. iii. 15. "And *killed* the prince of life." These passages all give us the idea, that wicked men were as much the cause of the death of Jesus, as they were of the death of Stephen. One of the arguments used by Mr. B. in favor of the miraculous death of our Lord, by the *dismission of his spirit*, viz. this, that he was dead sooner than was expected, has been commonly made use of to prove the greatness of his sufferings above common sufferers. And notwithstanding all which my antagonist has said, I see no cause to turn the argument out of the old channel.

Two or three things will now be suggested to show, that God did not only *predict*, what wicked men would do to his son; but that, all things considered, it was his choice, and the fixed purpose of his heart, to bring these dreadful sufferings upon him. How can this text imply any thing less: *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him?* And this; *Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the Shepherd?* Zech. xiii. 7. What was the sword with which God designed to smite the Shepherd? It was undoubtedly the very sword which was used. See Psal. xvii. 13, 14; *Deliver my soul from the wicked which is thy sword: from men, which are thy hand, O Lord.* By comparing the passage from Zechariah, with this from the Psalms; and comparing both

with the history of our Saviour's death, it seems as if nothing could, or need be clearer than this, That the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ designed to make use of wicked men to be *his sword*, to smite, and put to death the man who was his fellow, i. e. his well beloved Son. Thus Jesus viewed the matter himself long before the Roman band were put in array against him. "From that time forth Jesus began to show unto his disciples, how that he *must* go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be *killed*." Mat. xvi. 23. Peter thought there was no *must be* to such dreadful sufferings, as were in fact about to come upon his Master. But we all remember the rebuke which his Master gave him. It was not so strange that the disciples should not see the necessity of these dreadful sufferings beforehand, as that *we* should not see their necessity and utility, who live so long after they have taken place, and who have actually seen so much of the glory which was to follow. What instruction are we to learn from such passages as these? "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so *must* the Son of man be *lifted up*; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life: Joh. iii. 14. 15. "Ought not Christ to have suffered *these things*, and to enter into his glory?" "Thus it is written, and thus it *behoved* Christ to suffer." Luke xxiv. 26, 46.

Mr. B. has sought to do away my explanation of other passages adduced to support the doctrine of divine purposes, but I do not see any thing material to detain me in making further remarks on these texts. I must make a great effort to be concise, or the vindication which is now attempted will exceed its proper bounds. I hasten,

III. To assign another reason why I cannot change my views of the import of the text, which stands at the head of the first sermon, and come into the views of the Arminians: It is this, the doctrine which we drew from the text, still appears honorable to God, and not in the least opposed to any of his glorious perfections, or to any of the truths of his blessed word. He who has read Mr. Bangs' book will see, that it is eminently his strong hold, to disprove the *divine decrees*, by show-

ing how dishonorable they are to God, and how inconsistent they are with the doctrines of his word. He does not pretend to bring much direct proof from the scriptures, to show that God has not a purpose about every event. He strives hard by learned criticisms, and other means, to invalidate our direct proof; but his direct proof against us is very slender. I recollect scarcely any text introduced with a design directly to confront our doctrine, except Jer. xix. 5; "Which I commanded them not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind." And if there were not a great want of direct proof against the decrees, it is certain, this text would not have been used for this purpose; for if it contain any direct argument against *foreordination*, it is by its denying the *foreknowledge* of God: But Mr. B. is equally concerned with myself to defend the text from such an interpretation. Our opponents cannot but see that we have *much scripture*, which seems naturally to support the doctrine of a *divine plan* of creation, providence and grace: therefore, they choose to meet us in the field of *reason*, rather than in that of revelation. Here they feel as if they had no difficulty in confronting us. They think they can make our doctrine appear amazingly absurd, and even ridiculous. Now they display a great zeal for the honor of God. They cannot bear the thought, that he should, according to our sense of scripture, *work all things after the counsel of his own will*; because if he does, what, say they, will he do to his great name? It is good to be jealous for the honor of God; but it becomes us to be very careful, lest we think that we are more competent than he is himself, to tell what will be for his honor, and what will not. If he has expressed himself in his word in such a manner as clearly to convey the idea, that his hand and counsel are concerned in determining and bringing to pass what men, and even what wicked men do, we ought to conclude, that he does not view this as bringing any blot upon his holy character. And do we not act the more consistent part, when we set ourselves to work to reconcile this with his holiness, than when we undertake to show, that it is inconsistent with holiness, and therefore it must be that God did not mean as he said. If it were a solitary passage, which appeared to contain the

doctrine before us, it would not be so strange that it should be confronted by reason; but the passages are many, and some of them are exceedingly explicit. But I do not refuse to follow my antagonist into his castle. He says, "From the perfections of God's character it is impossible for him to foreordain whatsoever comes to pass." p. 18. He endeavors to show that this doctrine militates against the *justice*, *wisdom*, *holiness*, *goodness*, *truth*, and *immutability* of God.

There appear to be certain leading objections in the mind of the author of the Letters, running through this part of his subject, and indeed through his whole work, which if they could be removed, there is reason to hope the way would be prepared for a greater union in our religious sentiments. Let us not despair but that so desirable an object may yet be obtained. I shall not follow my antagonist from page to page; but shall endeavor to remove his leading objections, and shall be as particular as my plan of conciseness will admit.

1. It is evident, that one of the most capital objections which Mr. B. and all the Arminians, urge against the Calvinistic scheme of doctrine, and against the doctrine of a fixed decree, in particular, is, that it destroys the free agency of creatures. In the preface of his book, Mr. B. says, "any system which eclipses the glory of the divine attributes, and exculpates man from blame in his wicked conduct, must be unfriendly to the interests of religion. If man be not *free*, he is not responsible, nor a subject of moral government, neither rewardable nor punishable, upon the principles of justice and goodness." It is here *supposed*, that the Calvinistic system destroys free agency. p. 6. And in p. 16, it is *asserted*: "But according to your doctrine, they are no more the actions of men, than the moving of my pen are its actions; and in this case it would be as absurd to find fault with my pen for bad writing, as to find fault with men for their inconsistent conduct." Much to this effect runs through his whole book. This, it will be acknowledged, is a capital objection against the Calvinistic system, if it can be substantiated. But how do they attempt to do this? It will not be pretended that we *say*, men are not free agents. We go further in asserting free agency than Arminians them-

selves do. Mr. B. manifestly implies it in what he says p. 7, that fallen creatures cease to be free agents, unless they be in some measure restored by grace. But Calvinists carry the doctrine of free agency much further. They hold that all rational beings are free agents, however great, and however confirmed their depravity. We believe that neither the entire depravity of wicked men, nor the entire depravity of devils, destroys their free agency. Our opposition to the free agency of man, is not then taken from our concessions, but is, by our opponents, supposed to be *inferrable* from the other doctrines which we hold. But what are the doctrines that we hold, which stand in opposition to free agency? The Arminian will say, You hold to the doctrine of man's entire dependence on God when considered as a moral agent; and you hold that God has determined all his actions before he does them. It is acknowledged, that we hold to these doctrines, and it is believed that we may continue to hold to them, and yet not renounce the doctrine of man's free agency.

What is a free agent? Is it not a rational being who has faculties to discern between good and evil, and who exercises *choice*, and who is accountable for his conduct? Here I will shew in a word by what arguments I would prove, that we are *free* agents; and then how I would prove, that we are perfectly *dependent* agents.

As to free agency, I would say, 1st. We are *conscious* of a different freedom from the pen with which we write. Consciousness belongs to the first kind of *proof*. I know that I *choose* to write, but I know that my pen has no choice about it. This makes as much as a *small shade* of difference between me and my pen. See p. 24. 2dly. My conscience either accuses, or else excuses my actions, and passes judgment even upon the thoughts of my heart. This is another proof that I am not a machine. 3dly. We treat one another as free agents. This appears by all the regulations of society; such as having laws, and judges, prisons, &c. 4thly. The Supreme Being treats us as free and accountable agents, by giving us a *moral law*, and by rewarding and punishing according to the character which we pos-

sess. Are not these as good and substantial proofs of our free agency, as we could desire?

Let us now see what proof there is of our entire dependence on God; I mean dependence on him when considered as free moral agents; i. e. that *our will* is dependent on his agency. The *scripture* asserts this dependence, and *reason* can discover no other consistent way. Paul tells the Philippians, that it was God *who worked in them* both *to will* and to do. In the close of the epistle to the Hebrews, he prayed that the *God* of peace would *work in them* that which was pleasing in his sight. This implied, that if they had any thing in them which was pleasing, that is, any good moral exercises, God himself must produce them in their hearts. The apostle James, speaking of the new birth, says: "Of his own will begat he us." And Jesus Christ taught that men were born of the Spirit. And God says in the prophecy of Ezekiel, "A new heart will *I* give you." There might be innumerable quotations made from the scriptures, to prove that men are dependent on God for their moral exercises. And if the inspired volume had not taught this, reason could not teach us any other scheme, for we cannot conceive of any independence in *created* beings. To us it appears as absurd as to talk of *eternal* created beings.

Here then are two things proved from the Bible; so fully proved, that there can be no mistake: why then should we deny either of them? What right have we to say, that if we are dependent on God for our exercies, then we are not free? We well know that the things which *we* make, and which are dependent on *us* for their motions, (as a clock or a watch,) are not free agents. But does it follow that the Almighty cannot make a free agent, so that he shall begin to exist in the exercise of freedom, and continue to exist, both free and dependent? Does God operate at all on the heart, at any time; so that the good exercises of the heart are in the least degree the effect of such operation? But few will deny this. But if *complete* dependence on his operation, destroy freedom; then a small degree of dependence, must at least impair it.*

* Although Mr. B. says very much against our dependence on God for our volitions, representing such volitions as having

Now my antagonist manifestly takes this ground, that if the Lord directly operate on the heart of a christian, to produce the most fervent love, such love is not of the nature of holiness, any more than the shining of the sun, or the flowing of the water: Or in other words, if it be God who makes me holy, then I am not holy—If it be God who creates in me a clean heart, then I have not a clean heart—If he uphold me by his free spirit, then I do not stand. Why might we not as well say, If God cause the sun to shine, then the sun

nothing in them of a moral quality, any more than the motion of the pen in his hand, or of the ship before the wind; yet there is a place in his book, where he speaks of the grace of God as influencing the will. The place to which I refer is p. 83. "We freely grant," says Mr. B. "that the sinner does not take one step towards salvation, until divine grace *moves* him thereto, by enlightening his understanding, and by *influencing his will.*" What can be meant by God's influencing the will, in addition to his enlightening the understanding? It is obvious that my opponent has here made a distinction between the *understanding*, and the *will*; and between *enlightening*, and *influencing*. But what did he mean by influencing the will? Did he mean no direct operation of the spirit of God, giving the heart a right disposition? If he did not mean as much as this, he could mean no more by influencing the will, than by enlightening the understanding. There are only these two ways in which we can conceive of rational creatures being moved and drawn to their duty;—the one, by light (i. e. knowledge of truth and duty,) communicated to the understanding; the other, by *direct influence* upon the will, giving it an inclination to comply with duty. Now, if Mr. B. meant, "by influencing the will," any thing more than "enlightening the understanding," he must have meant that for which we contend, viz. *a direct divine influence on the heart.* But we do not see how he can consistently plead against us, that we entirely destroy the free agency of man, by representing him as altogether dependent on God for his exercises of heart, while *he* acknowledges *some* of this dependence, and yet believes in man's *entire* freedom. If divine influence upon the will of man had any *tendency* to destroy his free agency, then a little of this influence would partly destroy it. It is so with external force applied to the body. If I am, in this sense, resisted in a small degree, my natural liberty is, to just as great a degree, impaired. If therefore divine influence on the will operated in the same way, to abridge moral liberty, or free agency, the least influence would impair it. And we do not see but there would be the same kind of inconsistence in impairing, as in destroying the free agency of the creature.

does not shine. If God make the light, then light is not light. But it will be said, the light has no moral qualities, and is no more worthy of praise than darkness. It is acknowledged that light and darkness have no moral qualities, but it is not because they are *made*, that they are destitute of them. Things have just such qualities as the Creator has given them. He has not given light and darkness moral qualities, but he has given *them* different properties, and by these different properties they are distinguished. He has *made* men free agents, and therefore they *are* free agents. He has made his angels holy spirits, and therefore they are *holy*. It is as certain that angels and saints are what the Creator has made them, as that the sun and moon are what the Creator has made them. Is not this a singular mode of reasoning, to say, If *God made* things so, then they are not so. In the account which Moses gives us of the work of the Creator in the first chapter in the Bible, we are taught, that from day to day he formed one and another part of the creation, and *it was so*; i. e. as he willed it to be, and as he made it, so it was. This was as true of the sixth day's work, as of the work of any other day. On that day he made man after his own image; he made a moral agent, and he made him with a character, even a holy character; else how could it be said, that he made him after his own image? And who will say, that if God made him holy, then he was not holy; or that his holiness did nothing towards rendering him worthy of the complacency of his Maker? Who will dare to say, on supposition, that the Creator *formed* Adam's holy character, as much as he formed the sun, that then there was nothing more of a moral nature in the light of holiness in Adam's heart, than there was in the light of the natural sun? And if Adam could come into existence with a character for which he was entirely dependent on his Creator, there is no absurdity in supposing such dependence should be continued, and he continue to possess a character. The idea is this; that it would be no more inconsistent for God, after he had created him, to continue to work in him both to will and to do, than to bring him into existence with a will, and with a choice in favor of holiness.

We all do well to remember, that God is greater than man. His ways are above our ways as the heavens are higher than the earth. *We* cannot *originate* any existence, no, not the least particle of dust; but shall we argue hence, that God cannot do this, when we see that he has originated a world? From materials which the Creator has put into our hands, we can form many curious pieces of mechanism; but we cannot form any thing which shall have reason, or approach towards it; but the Creator has made an innumerable multitude of rational creatures, who are endued with all the faculties necessary to constitute them free and accountable agents. If *we* act upon a fellow-creature, to cause him to move, we destroy the freedom of *his* action; for we cannot act upon his will, to cause him to choose; but God can act upon our heart with as much ease as upon our body; he can work in us both to *will*, and to *do*.*

* This part of our subject will reflect light on the case of "the stern judge," introduced by Mr. B. pp. 19, 20, 21. He has endeavored to make our doctrine of Divine Decrees, and Divine Agency in executing the Decrees, appear to be glaringly absurd, by introducing a criminal who stands trembling before the bar of a stern judge, expecting to be condemned for committing a murder, which the judge himself had planned, and which he secretly influenced him to execute. To remove this seeming difficulty, let us remember, there is an infinite disparity between God and man in this thing. In the treatment of a character already formed, the resemblance is great between a human judge, and the Judge of all the earth. The Supreme Judge is bound by his holiness, to pass sentence according to his law, and according to the character of his creatures. He is no respecter of persons, and is a perfect pattern for all who sit in the judgment seat to pass sentence on their fellow men.

But with respect to creating rational beings, and determining and forming their characters, there is no resemblance between a human, and the Divine Judge. It is no part of the work of a human judge to create rational beings, and form their characters: Yet the Supreme Judge claims this as his prerogative. Concerning one he says, "I will harden his heart;" and to others he says, "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh." As far as men are said to do any thing towards forming a wicked character, it is meant, that they take the part of wickedness. Thus it is said concerning Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that *he sinned, and made Israel to sin.* His feelings, his laws, and his example, were all in favor

But some man will say, it is not *my* choice, unless *I choose* this choice. To this it may be replied: This plan will make you no more free, unless you had a previous choice, which chose this choice. On this

of idolatry. But nothing like this is intended, when the Divine Being is said to form evil characters. When he is said to harden the hearts of men, we do not obtain the idea that he has any hardness in his own heart; or that he has made any laws, or given his creatures any examples, in favor of wickedness. Still he is represented as having a design and agency in forming the character of his creatures, as much as a potter has in giving shape and size to his vessels.

We have already intimated that there is nothing among men, which can be compared to the great I AM, in giving existence to moral agents, and in governing that agency itself; yet the impropriety of our finding fault with our Maker for forming our character as he has, is forcibly inferred from the shocking idea which would be excited in our minds, by hearing the child complain to his parents for bringing him into existence such a child; or the thing formed complain of its former for making it thus. "Wo unto him that striveth with his maker: let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth: shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? Wo unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?" Isa. xlv. 9, 10. The same ideas are very fully expressed in the following passage: "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? shall *the thing formed* say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? Rom. ix. 18—21. What can give a more striking idea of the absolute dependence of created intelligents for all their devices conceived and executed, than the following interrogations: "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against him that lifteth it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood." Isa. x. 15. The Assyrian monarch who is here represented by the axe, the saw, and the staff, was as completely in the hand of God, as these tools are in the hand of the workman. If he died with the same character which is ascribed to him in this chapter, he will stand as a trembling criminal before the bar of the supreme Judge. Murder, wilful murder will be proved; not the murder of one man, but of "nations not a few." (See v. 7.) The Judge will not pretend that this man did not depend

scheme you are carried back forever in search of the freedom of the will, and you will never find it, unless you can discover that you had one choice, before the first choice, which may be considered as the parent of all the rest. If you are not willing to consider yourself a free moral agent, as soon as you find that you have a rational soul, and that you are choosing and refusing the objects which are presented to you, without you can also find what has caused you thus to will, I am persuaded it will be impossible for you ever to become satisfied as to your free agency.

If the question should be asked, why has God made creatures perfectly dependent on him for all their moral actions, as well as for every thing else? I would answer, He has made them so, because he could not make them otherwise. We can make a machine, which when it is completed, will go without our aid, because we take the advantage of the laws of nature, i. e. of the stated and known operations of the great first cause. Thus, in the clock we take the advantage of the law of gravitation; and in the water mill, of the law of fluids. The Supreme Agent can keep our works in operation, when they have gone out of our hands; but who is there to keep his works in operation, after they have gone out

on him for his existence, and for all his actions. He will not pretend but that he had an object to answer by the dreadful murders which this man committed: He will not even pretend but that he *sent* him to Jerusalem, to tread down the hypocritical inhabitants like the mire of the streets. (See v. 5, 6.) The Judge will feel concerned for the honor of his own name, to make it appear to the whole intelligent creation, that this wicked man was like the axe and the saw in his hand, and that all the mischief which he did, was made use of in his hand to promote good; so that by him, the Lord performed his work. (See v. 12.) And notwithstanding all this, the holy Judge will not hesitate to pronounce sentence, and execute it by punishing the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria. If the criminal should reply against the Judge, saying, Who hath resisted thy will? Did I not, as an instrument, help to fulfil thy decrees, and promote thy declarative glory? The Judge will reply; *Howbeit thou didst not mean so, neither did thy heart think so, but it was in thy heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few.* (See v. 7.) All the friends of divine government will say, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus."

of his hands? It requires Divine power, as much to uphold, as to create;—to keep in motion, as to set in motion; and to keep the will in motion, as much as to keep the body in motion. This is agreeable to the scripture representations concerning the perseverance of the saints in holiness. They, considered as *saints*, are said to be kept by the power of God; just as they were first made *willing*, that is, made saints, in the day of his power. To the above question I could reply, 2dly, If God can make creatures free, and at the same time perfectly dependent agents, it is infinitely desirable that he should make them all dependent, even if it were possible for him to make them otherwise. If free agents are perfectly dependent on God for all their moral actions, then while *they* are free, *God* can at the same time do all his pleasure, because their hearts are in his hand; and as the rivers of water he can turn them whithersoever he will. See Prov. xvi, 1.

Let us now see, whether the doctrine of *divine decrees* will destroy the agency of man. Mr. B. seems to view this as indisputable. Among the many sentences which are scattered through his whole work, I need quote but one to show his sentiment on this subject. "For the doctrine of foreordination, and universal and irresistible decrees, is totally subversive of free agency." p. 25. But why is foreordination totally subversive of free agency? It is because it gives an absolute certainty to the yet future actions of moral agents? It is evident from many things said in the Letters, that the absolute *certainty* and *fixedness* which a decree gives to future events, was one thing which made the author think, that the doctrine of decrees was subversive of free agency. But did he not know, that the same objection lay against his doctrine of prescience? What the omniscient God *foreknows* will be, most certainly *will be*. If his prescience is perfect, there will not be the smallest variation from that, in any thing which will ever take place. The author of the Letters was aware of the same difficulty attending his scheme which he charged upon ours: He suggested the difficulty, without doing any thing to remove it. In his preface he says, "Whatever mysteries therefore, there may be in the science of human nature, and however difficult it may be to obvi-

ate the objections which may be urged from *prescience*, there is no fact more certain than this, that man is a free agent, as it respects his moral conduct." So say we: However difficult it may be to obviate the objections which may be urged from *foreordination*, there is no fact more certain than this, that man is a free agent, as it respects his moral conduct. If our antagonist had stopped to obviate the objections which may be urged from prescience, he would have furnished us with the means of obviating those which may be urged from foreordination; at least so far as the absolute certainty of future events is concerned. Is it not strange that he should so easily glide over this difficulty with a single sentence, and then write several hundred pages, in which he should be continually charging the scheme of his opponents with absurdity and falsehood, when if he had only removed the difficulties out of the way of his own system, he would have removed them out of the way of theirs. It is a leading idea in Mr. B's. book, that decrees concerning moral actions, make those actions *necessary*, and necessary actions he thinks cannot be free actions. "And to have made man a necessary agent would have been to make him any thing besides an intelligent creature." p. 59. An action made necessary by compulsion, it is acknowledged, cannot be a free action. For example, if another man who is stronger than I, puts a knife into my hand and forces me to kill my neighbor, while *I* meant to do no such thing, I have not murdered my neighbor, I have not in the exercise of moral agency killed the man. But if Mr. B. means, that actions which are made perfectly certain, are necessary actions, then necessary actions may be free, else he must give up the doctrine of God's certain foreknowledge of the actions of moral agents. What would our author say about the state of the inhabitants of heaven after the day of judgment? Are they liable to change? Can the holy become filthy? And does this *fixedness* in holiness destroy their free agency, and make them something else besides intelligent creatures?

If it be not the *mere fixedness* of future events which is supposed to destroy free agency, but because it is *God* who has fixed these events, and determined to

bring them to pass, this will run into the same objection which has been already answered. If we can be persuaded that God can cause the exercises of moral agents, and still these exercises be free, there will be no peculiar difficulty in supposing, that he can *previously determine* to do so, and still they be free.

But after all, says the objector, you cannot make me believe that both sides of a contradiction are true. 'Man a free agent—and yet perfectly dependent for all his moral actions—has his own choice, and yet this choice was predetermined before he was born! What can be more repugnant to reason?' In the view of many who appear to be rational men, it is altogether more repugnant to reason, to suppose man to be capable of willing or doing, without God's working in him both to will and to do; or to suppose our moral actions were not determined by him, as much as the motion of the planets. But when theology is the subject, we ought to be sure that we reason out of the scriptures. And I presume it is not more difficult for the human mind to reconcile this, than many other things which are most surely believed by us all. We all believe in the eternity of the Godhead. But how amazingly difficult it is for our minds to conceive of a being, whose existence is, in this respect, so perfectly different from our own. We are ready to say, How can it be? He did not create himself, and no other being created him; how then came he to exist? The atheist says, "It cannot be, it is perfectly repugnant to my reason, and I must give up my rational faculties in order to believe it." But let the atheist remember, however difficult it is to conceive of the *eternity* of God, yet he must have existed from eternity, or nothing could now be in existence. The objector, with whom we have to do, will say, The eternity of the divine existence is mysterious, yet not contradictory; but there is no man who can reconcile decrees and free agency. We answer, they were reconciled in the mind of Peter, when on the day of Pentecost, he said to the crucifiers of Christ, Him being delivered by the *determinate counsel* and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by *wicked hands* have crucified and slain: and when to those who had thus fulfilled the determinate counsel of God, he said, Repent. The tears of this same Peter

testified, that there was nothing in his mind irreconcileable between decree, and moral agency, when he went out and wept bitterly for doing just so, as his divine Master had told him he certainly would do.

We have spent the more time on this topic, as we are persuaded that if our minds can be helped over the difficulty of free agency, as being consistent with divine decrees, other difficulties will not be insurmountable. But I proceed to other objections which are urged against God's having a fixed purpose concerning every thing which comes to pass.

2. It is urged against a divine plan, which shall include all the wickedness of creatures; that it makes God *the author of sin*, in such a sense that sin can all be charged to him—and that God, instead of being infinitely holy, must be the greatest sinner in the universe. "If every event which comes to pass, is brought to pass by God's plan, as you call it, or is an effect of his decree, then there can be no event however trivial in itself, however *wicked*, foolish and inconsistent, but what is included in this plan which you ascribe to God, and which according to your statement, is the effect of his uncontrolable decree. If this system does not ascribe wickedness, foolishness, and absurdity to God, there are no such things as wickedness, foolishness, and absurdity in the world; for all events whether they be wicked or good, foolish or wise, absurd or consistent, you intimate are included in God's plan." p. 15.

I admit, whether my Calvinistic brethren do or not, that a determination in God concerning every thing which comes to pass, implies that his *agency* is concerned in bringing every thing to pass, even the actions of wicked men. He has not only a counsel about all things, but he also *worketh all things* after that counsel. Mr. B. supposes it is not consistent for God to predetermine the actions of any free agents, because it destroys their freedom. But the present objection is this, that it is not consistent for him to predetermine the actions of *sinful* agents, because it makes him sinful; and especially if his agency be the *cause* of their sinful actions. Mr. B. reasons thus on the subject: "An unholy *effect* must have an unholy *cause*; but sin the effect is unholy, and therefore must proceed from an unholy

cause. Now according to your doctrine, sin originates from God as its 'efficient cause;' and from this it follows by fair consequence, that God is unholy." p. 26. If by an unholy effect be meant an unholy volition, that is, an unholy exercise of the will, it surely proves that there is an unholy heart from which it proceeds. But I hope Mr. B. did not understand me to say, that sinful volitions flowed out of the heart of Him who is perfect. God is not the cause of sin as a fountain is the cause of its streams. In this sense, evil does not proceed from him. Nor does sin exist any where, before it exists in the heart of the sinner. Here is the only place where it can be found. It is not first formed by the Divine Being, and then thrust into the creature. It exists in the creature alone, and there it exists as a thing of his own choice, and serves to stamp his character in the view of the omniscient God, and of all his intelligent creation.

There is no unholy effect while God is considered as the Agent, or efficient cause; i. e. all his acts are holy acts. The Holy One does not sin. He hardened the heart of Pharaoh; but the hardening act in God, was not hardness, any more than though it had been a softening act. God as Creator made all kinds of animals, the noxious and poisonous, as well as the harmless and useful: But we do not think of inferring thence, that the Creator is possessed of all these different qualities. The scripture represents the Most High as a potter, making moral vessels of perfectly different sorts; some unto honor, and some unto dishonor; and as turning the hearts of good men; and also as turning the hearts of wicked men, even to hate his people. See Psal. cv. 25. But who infers from this, that when God turned the heart of the Egyptians to hate his people, that then God was not himself holy?

A wise being will act wisely; a benevolent being will have a benevolent object in view. In this sense the effect will be like the cause. The infinite wisdom of God leads him to act wisely, even to an infinite degree. He has never done a foolish thing. My antagonist charges me with imputing folly to God, because I speak of him as including the sin of creatures in his plan. It would seem as though he had forgotten what

is said, Psal. lxxvi. 10, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." The wrath of man, though folly in *him*, is put to the wisest use by Him who is wise in counsel.

In page 49, Mr. B. speaking of sinful actions, says, "Which the scriptures ascribe exclusively to wicked men and devils." The *sin* of these actions they ascribe exclusively to wicked men and devils, but otherwise they do not ascribe these actions exclusively to them. To this purpose I might quote many passages of scripture. The one just now referred to in the 105th Psalm is to the point—so is Rev. xvii. 17, "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree to give their kingdom unto the beast, &c." God said concerning the Assyrian monarch, who was his rod, that *he would send him* against a hypocritical nation. The action of going to Jerusalem, to do mischief and to seek plunder, was exclusively the action of this ambitious monarch; but his going there as a rod to punish a hypocritical nation, is ascribed to the God of Israel. The Lord carefully marks the difference between his own conduct, and that of the man whom he used as his rod; "Howbeit he meaneth not so,"—i. e. the design of the man whom the Lord sent, and His design in sending him, were perfectly different.

It is thought by some to be totally inconsistent; that God should be represented as hardening the hearts of men by any efficient operation, and at the same time be displeased with them for such hardness. But is it not just as difficult to understand how he should create a clean heart in us, by an efficient operation, and still be pleased with this clean heart? This argument will have force with those who believe that divine efficiency is employed in causing *holiness* to exist in our hearts; for surely the holiness, of which he is the efficient cause, can be no more our holiness, than the sin, of which he is the efficient cause, can be our sin. But in both cases it is as completely ours, so far as to give us a character, and render us amiable or hateful, as if we possessed holiness and sin, without any cause out of ourselves.

Mr. B. says, p. 54, "For it is impossible he should foreordain that in which he hath no pleasure." It is acknowledged that it would be inconsistent with the

perfection of God, that he should contrive a scheme of creation and providence, which was, on the whole, bad, and in which he could take no pleasure. It would be perfectly inconsistent, to suppose the Holy One should make an intelligent universe, which should be the whole of it, under the dominion of sin;—or to suppose that the God of love should lay a plan, which should ensure misery to all his creatures that are capable of being made happy. But is it not evident, that God has ordained particular things, as parts of his benevolent administration, in which he has no delight for their own sake, but only for the good brought about by them? *It is appointed unto men once to die;* but the Lord has no pleasure in the death, temporal, or eternal, of the children of men. He declares, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth:" And it is also declared, "For Tophet is ordained of old." Isa. xxx. 33. God takes no pleasure in our troubles, for he doth not afflict willingly: yet *trouble does not spring out of the ground*, but is from the hand of God. The Most High has certainly no pleasure in the persecuting spirit, which wicked men have shown towards his people; and yet his people in solemn prayer are heard to say, "O Lord, thou hast *ordained* them for judgment, and O mighty God, thou hast *established* them for correction." Hab. i. 12. Therefore the argument of our author, That it is impossible God should foreordain that in which he hath no pleasure, loses all its force when brought into the light of revealed truth. He must either say, that God did not ordain these persecutors for judgment, and establish them for correction; or that he took pleasure in their wicked persecuting spirit;—or else he must give up his argument as unsound. Our opponents can no more get along than we can, without frequently making a distinction between God's taking pleasure in things for their own sake, and taking pleasure in the good which they are the means of effecting. Thus, they will acknowledge, that the Lord chasteneth his children;—that chastening is his strange work; but that he hath pleasure in the end of this chastening, to wit, the sanctification of his children. In this way we can see, that God determined that wicked hands should be employed in putting to death his well-beloved Son, not because he

delighted in the sufferings of his Son, or in the wickedness of the hands which put him to death, but in the infinite good which he designed thereby to bring to pass.

I know that the sentiment of a *universal divine efficiency*, does not prevail as extensively, as the belief of a *universal decree*. But those authors, who are afraid to adopt the doctrine of a universal efficiency, seem at times to feel the necessity of admitting such a doctrine. Mr. Scott, in his Notes on John xix. 19—22, speaking of Pilate's refusing to alter the superscription, says, "Which was doubtless owing to the secret power of God upon his heart, in order that this attestation of our Lord's character might continue." This secret power of God upon Pilate's heart did not produce any holiness, for he remained a totally depraved creature; his motive therefore must have been evil; but the pious author of the Family Bible, appeared to rejoice in God's efficiency upon the heart of a wicked man, in this instance, because he was struck with the holy design of God in exerting this secret power. Now why might not his mind, and the minds of all others be relieved, if they could only be made to understand, that there is always a perfect distinction between the agency of the Deity, and the action of the creature; and between His ultimate end, and that of the transgressor. With the doctrine of a universal divine agency in view, we can thank the Lord for all the good which we and others receive, even if a part of our favors are presented to us by the hands of graceless men. We can even thank the Lord for *inclining the hearts* of these men to show us favor. [See Ezra vii. 27, Neh. i. 11, and ii. 8, 18.] With this same doctrine in view, we can see the hand of God in all our afflictions:—whether our property be consumed by the fire of God falling from heaven, or be plundered away by the Chaldean bands, we can say, "The *Lord* hath taken away." [See Job i.] Mr. B. in seeking to get rid of the force of Isa. xlv. 5, 6, 7, so far as it appeared to militate against his scheme of doctrine, observes, "Plague, pestilence, sword and famine, are all the messengers of his vengeance which he sends upon cities devoted to wickedness. Every man ought to know there is a difference between *moral* and *natural* evil." p. 57. Mr. B. holds that it is con-

sistent for God to bring *natural* evil upon a wicked people. Among the natural evils which he enumerates, we find the *sword* is one; and he could not consistently have omitted it. See Ezek. xiv. 17, 21. Now we know the sword is a harmless thing if it do not have a hand to carry it. We know also that the hand which God commonly uses to bring the sword on any people, is a *wicked* hand. This was always the case when the Lord brought the sword upon the land of Israel. Here then according to the implied concession of our opponent, the Lord can govern, manage and direct *moral* evil, as well as natural. He can send an army of wicked men, whose sole object is mischief, to punish us, just as consistently as he can send an army of locusts and caterpillars. And if he can consistently send, or bring this army, then there is no inconsistency in supposing that he should *determine* to send them to make this, which is, on their part, a wicked invasion. And this would remove all the difficulty which is supposed to attend the sentiment, That the Holy One of Israel decrees the sinful actions of his creatures, and brings to pass what he decrees.*

3. Mr. Bangs argues, that the doctrine of a divine purpose about every thing which takes place, is unjust, as it would in effect be condemning the innocent.—"Now," says Mr. B. p. 18, "if God from all eternity foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, he ordained the condemnation of part of the angels, of Adam and all

* Mr B. thinks me to be inconsistent in speaking of God as foreordaining moral evil and being the efficient cause of it, and then talking about sinners *being given up* to commit iniquity. I think I am justified in using this different phraseology in speaking on this subject, since I have the Bible for my example. Compare Deut. ii. 30, "But Sihon, King of Heshbon would not let us pass by him; for the Lord thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate," &c. with Psal. lxxxi. 12; "So I gave them up unto their own heart's lust." &c.

See also Ex. iv. 21; Josh. xi. 20. compared with Rom. i. 24, 26. Infinite wisdom saw best to make use of both of these modes of speaking on this deep subject, and I cannot see how it ought to subject any one to ridicule for imitating so perfect a model. When God speaks of giving sinners up to their own heart's lust, it implies that they possess a wicked nature, and yet it does not imply, that when they *sin* they act independently of God.

his posterity while in a state of perfect innocence." Here let it be remarked; That it is no worse for God to decree a thing from all eternity, than to decree it one moment before it takes place; for he was as able to decree well then, as now; so that the decree being from *all* eternity, and "a decree, the date of which is lost in eternity," is nothing more against it than though it were but now determined. Here I might ask my antagonist, whether there is any inconsistency in this, That God should have determined before he made angels and men, that he would make them, and that he would make them after his own image, and that when they should exist in this perfect state, he would treat them according to their character? But would not this be justifying them as righteous characters, before they possessed such characters, i. e. before they existed? Yet I presume there is no difficulty attending the case stated; for God calleth things which are not as though they were. Let us now contemplate our world as all involved in apostasy, and let us suppose that God has determined to bring many of them to repentance and to glory. Does this imply that God justifies the wicked while they remain wicked; and that he takes them to heaven in their sins, because that while they are in their sins, he forms his determination to save them? There is no difficulty in the case which Mr. B. has started, any more than in the cases which I have now introduced, except that which relates to God's foreordaining the *sin* of men and angels: and this difficulty has already been considered.

4. The author of the Letters urges this argument against the doctrine under consideration; That it represents God as very weak and deficient in his understanding. "Here you reduce," says Mr. B. "the infinitely wise God to the level of an ignorant mechanic, who cannot see the end from the beginning without a prescribed plan. I conclude his own infinite mind is sufficient to guide him in all his multifarious works and ways, without any previously devised "plan or scheme." p. 21. I ask whether an increase of knowledge diminishes the use and necessity of a plan. It evidently makes it much easier to lay a plan. The knowledge may be so great, as to enable one to lay his

plan in a moment: but without a plan, I think it must be as impossible for such an architect as Sir Christopher Wren, to build an edifice, as for the most ignorant workman;—and that, without a previous plan, it would be as difficult for such an accomplished architect, to build a regular cottage, as to build that spacious and noble edifice, St. Paul's Church in London. As far as we have any idea of wisdom in our world, it does not consist in acting without plan or system, but in laying a good plan, and then, as far as such a plan is good, in adhering to it. And when the scriptures speak of God as acting systematically, they manifestly speak of it to his honor. To this purpose suffer me to quote Isa. xlvi. 9, 10, "I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, *My counsel shall stand*, and I will do all my pleasure."

Under the present objection against foreordination, we may introduce what is said against this doctrine on account of its sullying the glory of the divine prescience. "Another reason why your inconsistent doctrine sullies the glory of infinite wisdom is, that it supposes it impossible for God to foresee what *will be*, unless he predetermine it *shall be*. The doctrine espoused by us acknowledges, not only that his infinite prescience seeth what *will be*, but also all that may, and *might have been*." pp. 22, 23. Let this matter be candidly investigated. Mr. B. and his brethren, I presume, do not suppose that God foreknows what might have been, in the same sense as he foreknows what will be; i. e. he did not foreknow them both as events which would actually happen. But how came there to be any difference between the two; even so much difference, that one only might have been, and the other actually will be? Why did not *the might be* event actually exist? For an illustration of this matter;—God saw that the earth might have had two moons, instead of one; but he saw that it would actually have but one. But what was there to make the latter certain, while the other only might have been? It was not the foreknowledge of its certainty, for this foreknowledge of its certainty implies a previous certainty. It would be foolish to say, that the reason why the earth is attended

by one satellite, in distinction from two, was this; that the Creator foresaw that while it might have had two, it would actually have but one. Is it not more intelligible, and much more honorable to God, to say, that the reason why the Creator foresaw there would be one, and only one, was this; that he determined to make one, and no more. He saw he could make two, or ten; but he saw that it would be best to make but one.

"To say, that his prescience depends on his predetermination, is to suppose a time when the Almighty did not possess infinite knowledge." p. 23. Let this objection be examined: There is a difference between *knowledge* and *foreknowledge*. Every thing belonging to the Supreme Being is eternal. We read of "his eternal purpose." His eternal foreknowledge is implied in that passage, Acts xv. 18; "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world;" or from eternity, as the Greek might be rendered. "His understanding is infinite," and of course, it is eternal The *knowledge*, *foreknowledge*, and *purpose*, are from eternity, yet they possess such a relation to each other, that one must be conceived of as existing in the *order of nature*, though not in the order of *time*, before the other. First we must conceive of a Being of infinite understanding, employing this understanding to discover the best manner of operating; to see what system would bring most glory to the Creator, and most good to the creature. Here we may conceive of all possible systems passing before him By all possible systems, I mean all the systems which he had power to originate, provided he saw fit to originate them; and not that it was possible that any one of them should exist, without he saw fit to give it existence. His infinite knowledge was fully able to make a selection from all possible systems of that which was best. This system which his knowledge saw would be the best, his infinite goodness constrained him to choose. He did freely choose it. He said, Let it be! It was his will that it should come into existence. This is what the scripture calls the *counsel*, *decree*, *purpose*, or *determination* of God. Next in the order of nature, we conceive of his prescience, or foreknowledge of the existence of this system, and of every part of it, in that

very order in which he saw it was best it should come into existence. There never was a time when the infinite Mind had not this knowledge, this purpose, and this foreknowledge; and yet we cannot conceive of them except in this order, without confusing our ideas of the subject. Certainly we ought not to conceive of God, as determining to bring a system of creation and providence into existence, which he did not see to be a good one, yea, even the best which could exist. And certainly we cannot conceive of God as foreknowing that a certain system, in distinction from all other possible systems, would actually go into operation, without conceiving of him as first determining, that this very system should be brought into operation.

It is far from giving a more exalted conception of the Most High, to represent his prescience as independent of his purpose; for it seems to go upon the supposition, that there was from eternity some other being, or thing, to give certainty to the existence of a world, and to the existence of the various events which should happen. *We* can foreknow things which we have not predetermined, and concerning which we have no purpose, because there is a Being above us, whose purposes will not be broken off. These purposes he can, if he please, reveal to us, as he has done with respect to the reign of Christ on the earth, the fall of Babylon, the day of judgment, &c. Now *we* have a foreknowledge of these events which are to happen. But if there were no being in the universe, who had purposed that there should be a Millennium, and a day of judgment, then no being in the universe could have a prescience of these things. It is just as absurd to say that God foreknew there would a world come into existence, independently of his determination to create one, as to say, that he foreknew that thing *would be*, which would *never be*. Nor is it any less absurd, to suppose that he foreknew what events would occur after the world was made, without having laid a plan for the government of the world.

Mr. B. and other Arminians suppose, that the predictions of the scriptures are wholly built on the divine prescience;—that God has no plan concerning future events, but only foresees what those events will be. Let

us consult a few of these predictions, that we may determine whether they are mere manifestations of intellectual strength in the Divine Being. The prophecies which went before the coming of Christ; were they mere displays of foreknowledge? Did they only prove that God foresaw there would be a Saviour? "But unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise, with healing in his wings." Mal. iv. 2. "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren like unto thee." Deut. xviii. 18. So the predictions concerning John the Baptist, appear to be something more than foreknowledge: "Behold I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me." Mal. iii. 1. When in the 46th chapter of Isaiah, Jehovah is asserting his real divinity, in opposition to all the idols of the heathen, he brings forward this as one proof; that he declared the end from the beginning—and then proceeds to say, "My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure: calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, *I* will also bring it to pass; I have *purposed* it, I will also do it." From this it appears, that the end, which the living and true God declared from the beginning, was his *counsel*, and was that counsel which was to be executed by the ravenous bird from the east:—It was his purpose, and what he would bring to pass. Much the same language is used, Isa. xiv. 24; "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand." We have a specimen of the language of divine prediction in Ezek. xxxviii. 16; "And thou shalt come against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land, it shall be in the latter days, and *I will bring thee* against my land, &c." These and numerous other prophecies of the Bible, are couched in language which implies, that God has a *purpose* to accomplish by the events which are foretold.

5. It is objected against a divine predetermination about every thing, that it gives us diminutive views of the high and lofty One. This is implied in a sentence which I have already quoted from p. 15. "If every event which comes to pass is brought to pass by God's

plan, &c. *then there can be no event however trivial in itself, &c.*" Does not the objector see a great many *trivial things*, as he would call them, in the creation? And yet one and the same God created the heavens, and the earth, and all the host of them. He who created the sun to give light in the firmament of heaven, also created the glow-worm. He who created great whales, created all the little fishes, and the little insects, even those which can be seen only by the help of glasses. The same Almighty Being, who made the cedars of Lebanon, made the hyssop which springeth out of the wall. He who formed globes formed every particle of matter. Does it degrade the Almighty in our view, to consider him as the *Creator* of *little* things? And would it relieve our minds, to believe that he created the little things without any *design?* If in the character of Creator, we must consider God's hand and counsel concerned in every thing which was made, so that "without him there was not any thing made which was made;" why shall we not, when we consider him as the God of *providence*, speak of him as ordering every event, even the minutest? Did Jesus Christ represent it as dishonorable to God to concern himself with little events? Did he not teach us, that his heavenly Father fed the fowls of the air;—and that a little worthless sparrow could not die without the ordering of his holy providence? And how could he more strikingly teach us, that the providence of God was concerned with small events, or "trivial things," than by saying, "The *very hairs* of your head are all numbered?" Mat. x. 30. This important saying stands in such connexion, as most evidently to teach, not merely the omniscience of God, but more particularly his providence in its most unlimited extent. If God's *providence* is concerned with "trivial things," it can be no diminishing of his glory, to suppose his *scheme* of providence embraced them. And as it would be utterly impossible to conceive of God as creating the world, considered as a whole, without creating the individual parts of which it is composed; in like manner we cannot conceive of God as having any providential government over the world, without supposing him to concern himself in all the particular events, which put to-

gether make up the *system* of providence. In fine, we must view him as working *all things*, (not excluding "trivial things,") after the counsel of his own will.*

6. Mr. Bangs urges this as a capital objection against our doctrine, That it makes the *purposes* and *commands* of God oppose each other; and that it makes it impossible for us to determine what our duty is. A quotation or two from his Letters will show how much weight he lays on this objection. "Your doctrine," he says, "militates against the wisdom of God by making the decrees and commands clash———— Here then are two *works* of the Almighty, his *decrees* and *commands* directly opposed to each other. Is this harmony? Such conduct is so far from being a mark of wisdom, that it is indicative of the most consummate duplicity and folly." p. 22. In the 42d page he revives the subject again. He says; "And when men fulfil the counsel of God, do they not do their duty? Or must they act contrary to that counsel in order to do their duty? Or will you here say also that God's commands and counsels are opposite? If so, when do we do our duty, when we obey the command, or when we fulfil the counsel."†

* After writing the above article, I had occasion the same day to ride into a neighboring town. The people of the house where I lodged informed me, that they had been that day to attend the funeral of one of their neighbors. It was a man who was taken from the head of a family. I asked the cause of his death. They informed me, that he died of a wound received by being thrown from his wagon a few days before; —and that this was occasioned by the man's permitting two boys to get into his wagon, who had some ducks, either in their hands, or in a basket. Soon after the boys were taken in, one of the ducks flew away, and this frighted the horses, and caused them to run; and this threw the man from the wagon and caused his death. I thought with myself; Here is a providence which will illustrate the article which I have been writing to-day. The death of a *man* is not a "trivial thing;" it is an event of sufficient importance for God to put into his great scheme of providence; but the flying of a duck is one of the trivial things: Yet it is evident, according to the account given me, that if the *duck had not flown*, the *man had not died*.

† Mr. B. says, p. 280, "If God *command* one thing, and decree in direct opposition to it, why may he not also *promise* one thing, and yet never decree to accomplish it?" There is

"I cannot see the least difficulty in answering these questions. The decree is the purpose of God concerning what he himself will do. How plainly is this taught, Isa. xiv. 24; "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have *purposed, so shall it stand.*" So also in Isa. xlvi. 11; "I have purposed it, I will also do it." The purpose of God, what he will do, is a rule only for himself. His purpose is most commonly kept secret until it is manifested by the event; for "it is the glory of God to *conceal* a thing:" But if he reveals his purpose, as he sometimes does, it does not become the rule of our duty. Christ made known to Peter what God's purpose about him was; namely, that he should deny his Lord and Master. But was Peter any at loss which was to be the rule of his duty, the command, which required he should confess Christ before men; or the purpose of God, that he should deny him? His denial of Christ did not arise from his being at loss about duty, but it was the fruit of that fear of man which bringeth a snare.

But still it will be said, How does it appear consistent, that God should purpose one thing, and command another? Mr. B. says, that such a thing would be "indicative of the most consummate duplicity and folly:" and yet in p. 57, he acknowledges the propriety of God's *sending* the *sword* as well as famine upon cities devoted to wickedness. Thus God sent Sennacherib to punish Jerusalem. See Isa. x. The command of God to the Assyrian monarch was the same as to all other men, *Love thy neighbor as thyself. Thou shalt not covet any thing which is thy neighbor's.* His carry-

this difference between a command, and a promise. The command obligates the commanded; the promise obligates the promiser. The commands of God lay us under obligation to him, but his promises lay him under obligation to us. He is not bound to order his providences so as to secure our obedience; but he is inviolably bound by his holiness, to order his providences in such a way, as not to break his promise, or alter the thing which has gone out of his mouth. The command of God is no prediction of what will be,—it is a mere statement of our duty; but his promise is a prediction of a future event; which event he has pledged his veracity to bring into existence.

ing the sword to destroy Jerusalem, was directly against the commands of God; but it was in perfect coincidence with the purpose of God, not only by the testimony of the scriptures, but also by the concession of my antagonist, who allows that God has a right to send the sword; and I conclude that he will not dispute but that he has a right to send it in the hand of just such a man as the proud king of Assyria. I also conclude, that if it does not appear inconsistent that God should *send* a man to break his commands, (as the wicked Sennacherib evidently did,) it will not appear inconsistent that he should *purpose* to send him.

If the Most High purposed that Christ should be crucified by wicked hands, (which I am persuaded will appear to the most of my readers an incontrovertible truth,) the harmony of the divine conduct is illustrated. The *command* to all, is the same; *This is my beloved Son, hear ye him—Reverence my Son.* The *purpose* was, that some should not hear and reverence him, but put him to death. Where is the consummate duplicity and folly of the Divine Father in this matter? Was it foolish for him to require all to reverence his Son? Could he have required less?—could he have exempted an individual from obligation to this command? All must say, The requirement was perfectly consistent. Then let me ask, Was it inconsistent that the Father should determine his Son should be crucified by wicked hands? Dare any one say, that this was a foolish determination? And yet it could not go into operation without the most flagrant violation of divine commands. But does the command, to reverence the Son, and the purpose, to have him hated and crucified, really make our heavenly Father appear like a double-minded Being? Does he not, in determining upon the crucifixion of his Son, by wicked hands, manifest a very great regard to that holy law which was so palpably transgressed by the wicked crucifiers?

The objection which we now have in view, takes a thing for granted which is by no means true, viz. that if God purposes things shall be done, which will be contrary to his commands, that then he acts against his own commands—that he shows two sides, manifesting by the commands, that he loves what is command-

ed, and by his decree, that he loves the transgression of his commands. If the purpose of God, that his commands should, in a certain instance, be broken, were the same as a counter command, it would, we must acknowledge, make the divine Law-giver appear inconsistent with himself, If the God of Israel had said to Pharaoh, I require you to let my people go; and, I require you not to let my people go, there would have been no consistency in it: But he uniformly required Pharaoh to let his people go; and yet it was evidently his purpose, that he should not let them go, until he had wrought all his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the land of Ham. To say, that the Almighty never had any purposes which, by going into effect, would issue in creatures' disobeying his commands, is to say, that he had no purpose about the means of bringing Joseph and Jacob and his family into Egypt;—also that he had no purpose about making his name to be declared in all the earth by Pharaoh;—or by the forty years sojourning of the Israelites in the wilderness. It would be to say; that God had no purpose about all the chastenings which his people received from the heathen who dwelt among them, and round about them; for the inflicting of all these chastenings implied disobedience to his commands, on the part of the heathen. If it should be said, that God purposed to make use of the heathen, to scourge his people, but it was *after* they had transgressed; I answer, This does not relieve the difficulty at all; for however late the purpose was formed to use such a scourge, and however great his provocation, it was a purpose, to make use of their disobedience to his law, to answer the ends of his holy government. Going on the ground of the objection, He, who ruleth among the kingdoms of men, had no plan about the rise and fall of the four successive monarchies, spoken of in the book of Daniel; for the sin of men was the great thing used in their rise and fall. He had no plan about the flight of the infant Saviour into Egypt, for it was the malice of Herod which drove him thither. He had no purpose that he should be tempted in the wilderness, for Satan was the tempter. He had no purpose concerning his being betrayed, for none but a wicked man would betray him; and no wick-

edness must be included in his plan. There must be no purpose about Peter's denying his Master, for that would suppose *decree* against *command*. There must be no purpose about the crucifixion, for it would involve the same difficulty. It would not, on the ground of the objection, be consistent for God to determine to make use of the Roman guard to watch the sepulchre, so as to give greater proof of the resurrection of the Saviour, for on the part of man, it was sin, which provided this guard. Now on the plan of the objector, the omniscient Being foresaw all these things, but he had no purpose about them; nor could he make any arrangement in his scheme of providence to give existence to these events, for then he would set his decrees in battle array against his commands. But can any man read the Bible representations of these things, and not feel himself compelled to acknowledge, *Here is something more than prescience;—This is the finger of God?*

7. It is objected, That divine decrees, in connexion with divine efficiency on the hearts of creatures, destroy moral government, and render commands and motives perfectly nugatory. "Indeed," says Mr. B. p. 280. "if a man be compelled by a secret, almighty power in all he does," (which is the way in which he chooses to express our doctrine of an invisible influence on the heart,) "he is no more actuated by external motives, by commands or promises, nor by any part of revelation, than the *ship driven by the fierce winds*" Perhaps he thinks, that we suppose the moral world can be kept by the *mere* power of God, as much as the natural. It is believed, however, that *we* hold more fully to the use and necessity of *moral means*, to preserve holy creatures from falling, than *they* do who oppose our doctrine. We believe, that all that display of truth which is made by creation and providence; by the apostasy of some creatures, and by the recovery of some; by the law, and the gospel; by the feelings the divine Being manifested towards holy and unholy characters;—that all this varied display of truth is made, and will be kept in the view of God's holy kingdom, as the means of preserving, and perfecting their character and blessedness. All

this varied display of divine truth, will not render the influence of the Holy Ghost unnecessary; nor will the influence of the Holy Ghost render the display of truth unnecessary. The prayer of Christ for his disciples was, "Sanctify them through thy truth." Now, our opponents are not willing to acknowledge the necessity, or the use, of so many moral means, to keep the intelligent system in order. They think it derogatory to the Supreme Ruler, to suppose that he needed to make a display of sin, by the existence of sinful characters; and of his opposition to sin, by the actual punishment of it, or by an atoning sacrifice;—and that he needed to display the goodness of his heart, by forgiving and saving sinners through this atoning sacrifice; in order to build up and establish an everlasting kingdom of holiness.

But our opponents will say, If you do believe in the use of commands and motives, and other moral means, there is no consistency between believing thus, and believing that God is the efficient cause of all we do. So they *think*,—so they *say*: But shall these pass for incontrovertible arguments? Is not the sentiment familiar to christian experience, (whatever philosophers may think about it,) that means of instruction are useful, and yet their usefulness depends on the invisible operations of the Spirit: that we must keep ourselves in the love of God, though we are kept by the power of God? How familiar was this to the experience of St. Paul. Take this for a specimen: "Whereunto *I also labor*, striving according to his working, *which worketh in me mightily*." Col. i. 29. The apostle referred to the work of a Divine Agent, who wrought in him mightily. Was not this a secret and almighty power? And was it not that which produced this labor and striving of which he speaks? And yet he speaks of himself as an agent, who labored and strove.

8. It is objected that our doctrine of decrees is *self-contradictory*. How does our author substantiate this charge? My reader shall hear: "In the first place you say, every event is brought about by the Almighty; and in p. 11, you quote 2. Sam. xvii. 14, *For the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel*, and then add, "Ahithophel's counsel was frustrated,

because it was contrary to the counsel of him who says, *My counsel shall stand, I will do all my pleasure.*" Was not the counsel of Ahithophel an event? and you say all events are brought about by the Lord; and yet here you say, "it was contrary to the Lord's counsel," p. 28. Ans. There is quite a difference between Ahithophel's *giving counsel*, and that *counsel's going into effect*. Now it was by no means contrary to the counsel of the Lord, that Ahithophel should give counsel, and that he should give just such counsel; but it was manifestly contrary to the counsel of the Lord, that the counsel of Ahithophel should be followed. We know that the Lord, in mercy to David, did not suffer Absalom to follow it; therefore I said, "Ahithophel's counsel was *frustrated.*" Does the word, "frustrated," in this connexion mean, that Ahithophel never gave any counsel? for it must mean this, to make out any inconsistency. I am willing to acknowledge that Ahithophel's *giving counsel* was an *event*, and this event most indubitably came to pass.

In this connexion I would just notice Mr. B's. comment on Prov. xix. 21; *There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.* "Here," says Mr. B. "*the counsel of the Lord* is put in opposition to the *many devices in a man's heart.*" p. 49. Ans. The devices of a man's heart mean sometimes the things devised to be done, and sometimes the purpose of the mind about those things.—The text before us most evidently means, that men often form projects which God does not suffer them to carry into effect. In the same page Mr. B. proceeds to say, "Is it not surprising, that you should quote this text to prove that "every sin in the universe is decreed," and then in your comment admit, that there were many sinful devices in the heart of Joseph's brethren, which "did not agree with the counsel of the Lord?" I ask, could my antagonist fail to understand me? And if he understood me, could he have added this exulting sentence: "Are *all things agreeable* to God's counsel, and many things *disagreeable* to it? O error, how dost thou bind thy admirers in the knot of contradiction!" Is there a child who reads this book, who does not see, that there is not the least contradic-

tion in what I say about Joseph's brethren? I said, "There were many devices in the hearts of Joseph's brethren; one was to kill him; but that did not stand: another was to leave him in the pit; but that did not stand." Does not the child understand me to say, that these devices, or projects were not *executed?* I am sure he cannot understand me to say, that they never had any such devices in their hearts; or that their having such devices in their hearts, was itself contrary to the counsel of the Lord.

I shall at present take notice of but one other objection which Mr. B. urges against the doctrine of decrees. He says, "Your doctrine destroys the immutability of God." We should hardly have expected to hear those, who deny any divine plan, charge *us* with destroying the immutability of God, who hold that he governs all things, according to his own immutable counsel. Mr. B. says, "From the immutability of his counsel, we may suppose that he never alters any of his designs. In the account Moses has given of the creation of the world, it is said at the conclusion of the whole, *And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good.* Man at this time was holy—He afterwards became unholy—and if this change was an effect purely of an act of God, which it must have been, if all things are brought to pass by him, then God changed his design—he first designed man should be holy, and afterwards that he should be unholy; unless you can make it appear that holiness and unholiness are one and the same, or that God designed that he should be holy and unholy at the same time, which is a contradiction." p. 30. It would be a contradiction for God to design that man should exist a perfectly holy, and a totally sinful creature at the same time: But I do not see that it is any contradiction for God to design that he should be at one time a perfectly holy creature, and at another time a totally sinful creature. Man cannot be in this sense holy, and unholy at the same time; but God might at the same time lay his plan which should include both these states of man. Mr. B. intimates, that according to our doctrine, "God first designed man should be *holy*, and afterwards that he should be *unholy*." It would be contradictory to suppose, that God first de-

termined that man should be *forever* a holy creature, and that he afterwards determined that he should become an unholy creature. But it is no contradiction to suppose that he determined that he should be holy for such a period, and that after the expiration of this period he should become unholy. In the same divine counsel might also be included his recovery to holiness.—Summer and winter, and day and night, are quite different from each other; but they are evidently parts of one and the same scheme of providence. "His *steady* counsels *change* the face of the declining year." I do not quote this as of divine authority; but its truth is so apparent when applied to the varying seasons, that none will dispute it. And is there any thing in itself contradictory, to apply it to the whole system of providence? In this system there are innumerable events, and events of all sorts and descriptions; but they are all working together as a great whole, to promote the glory of God, and the good of those who love him. The work of redeeming sinners by Jesus Christ, was no doubt all planned at once; that is, the whole is one plan. And this plan must have included such things as these; an infinite Redeemer—his holy life, his holy doctrine;—also a traitor, a cross, crucifiers, &c. These different, and, as to their character, opposite things, were the *one counsel* of that God, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. The mount of transfiguration, and the mount of Calvary, both help fulfil the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

The doctrine of our opponents which denies any *system of events*, and only acknowledges a *system of rules*, is incompatible with immutability in the Supreme Being. According to their doctrine, innumerable events have taken place, which the Deity not only dislikes for their own sake, but which he dislikes on every other account, so that he would have prevented them if he had been able. They are not willing to say, it was a part of God's wise plan, that his Son should be crucified by wicked hands; they choose rather to say, that he could not have prevented it, without infringing upon the freedom of his creatures. This scheme of doctrine, if we do not misapprehend it, represents the

Divine Being as perpetually changing from his original designs, to accommodate himself to the exigency of the times, tho' all things considered, he wishes no such exigency had occurred. But the scheme of doctrine which we advocate, does not impute the least shadow of turning to the Father of lights. It supposes him to be as absolute in the work of providence, as in the work of creating the world. This doctrine makes God appear great and glorious; yea, *unchangeably* great and glorious. It invites us to trust in him with all our heart, because he is God almighty, his counsel will stand, he will work, and none can hinder him.

SECTION II.

A VINDICATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF TOTAL DEPRAVITY, CONTAINING A REPLY TO OBJECTIONS RAISED AGAINST THIS DOCTRINE IN MR. BANGS' SECOND LETTER.

MR. BANGS' Second Letter is intended to detect and refute the errors of my second Sermon. This Sermon was designed to prove *the total depravity* of unrenewed nature. The text chosen for this purpose was Rom. vii. 18. *For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.* It was my object, in explaining the text, to show that Paul meant to confess, that in him, until recovered by renewing grace, there was *no holiness*. I have these words; "It is a full acknowledgment, that in his *nature*, unchanged by grace, there dwelt nothing better than sin,—not the least particle of holiness." Sermons, p. 31. But Mr. B. could not but know, from what I said in my lengthy explication of the text, that I did not intend to represent the apostle as declaring that he was then, when he wrote his epistle, in a state of total depravity. The contrary of this is fully declared in the Sermons, p. 30. Was it proper then for my antagonist, in writing a book, which he had reason to think would be read by many, who would never see my Sermons, to make such a statement as the following? "For, if I mistake not, you think a man may be as pious as was the apostle Paul, and yet be *totally sinful*. The explanation of your text leads me to this conclusion. You hold that he was regenerated when he wrote his admirable epistle to the Romans; and yet you think he taught the doctrine of

total depravity in your text, *I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing*. This you suppose he spoke of himself as his then present state, and therefore he must have been at that time both totally depraved, and regenerated!" p. 88. This supposed contradiction in my book, is made a point of much importance by the author of the Letters. Besides the quotation now made, he devotes nearly two pages more to the exposure of the glaring absurdity of a regenerated *totally* depraved sinner. But let me ask the candid of every creed and name; Is it any absurdity for a regenerated sinner, to tell what his character was before regeneration? If there is now an *old*, and a *new* man within him, is there any thing in itself contradictory, that he should now tell what the nature or character of the old man is, though he should not, at the same breath, say any thing about the nature or character of the new man?

The doctrine drawn from the text, was *the total depravity of all unrenewed men*. I shall here make a short quotation from the explanation which was given of the doctrine. In the 32d page of the Sermons it is stated; "By total depravity we do not mean, that men thus depraved cannot reason correctly, even on religious subjects; nor that they cannot be clearly convinced of of their duty; nor is it meant, that there is none of the *external* conduct of unrenewed men such as it ought to be. But by total depravity is meant, that the *heart* is wholly and continually under the power of sin." If this definition of depravity be kept in view, it will render it unnecessary for me to reply to what Mr. B. says about the light and conviction, of which unrenewed men are the subjects. If by their light, be meant their holiness, they are no longer sinners, but *saints*, that is, holy ones. But if by light, in application to the unconverted, be meant such knowledge as does not imply holiness, then Calvinists do not pretend that the unconverted are totally destitute of light. Let their light of this kind be ever so great, what does that prove against the entire sinfulness of their hearts? Mr. B. quotes a sentence from the Sermons in which it is said, "A knowledge of this (namely, of our depravity) is forced upon us in that conviction which precedes a change of heart." To this he

adds, "Here you give up the point for which I contend." p. 88. What point have I given up? Have I conceded, that previously to regeneration we have any holiness of heart? I have spoken of the sinner's having a knowledge of his depravity, and a conviction of sin, before his heart is changed. Mr. B. has made the words, *knowledge* and *conviction*, emphatical. We grant that *knowledge*, and *conviction*, sometimes imply holiness of heart. The Psalmist says, "They who *know* thy name will put their trust in thee." Psal. ix. 10. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John viii. 32. In these and many other passages, knowledge implies a holy discernment, such as is peculiar to them who are born of God. But it cannot have this meaning in many passages: I would instance Luke xii. 47, "And that servant which *knew* his Lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." In that noted text in the 16th chapter of John, where the Comforter is promised to reprove, or, as it might be rendered, convince the world, there is reason to believe that it comprehends both the conviction which precedes, and also that which is subsequent to regeneration. There is a conviction of sin, which implies a *holy sense* of its vile and ill deserving nature; and there is a conviction of sin, which may cause us to feel very guilty before God, in which there is no holy sense of its vileness, and ill desert. Peter had this view of the evil of sin when he went out and wept bitterly; but this view of sin had no place in the conviction of Judas, nor has it any place in the conviction of any graceless sinner.

I would here remark, that it is exceedingly unprofitable to dispute about *words*. If a writer has used words and phrases improperly, let his antagonist tell him so; but he ought not to represent him as self contradictory, merely because he uses words differently from what he himself does. The object of a religious dispute should be, to come at truth, and to bring those who have erred from the truth into the right way. Mr. Bangs conceives me to be in an error, for believing unconverted men have nothing of the nature of holiness in their hearts, or in other words, that they are totally sinful. But how does he convince me of this? He attempts to

do it by showing me that I myself hold there is a degree of holiness in the unconverted. But how does he prove that I hold to this? By showing that I have said, that a knowledge of their depravity is forced upon them in that conviction which precedes a change of heart. But did not Mr. B. know, and that from the sermon which then lay before him, that I did not view this knowledge and conviction as being of any better character, than the conviction which wicked men will have in the day of judgment? I am by no means convinced but that I made a correct use of words; but if I did not, it became him, as a fair disputant, to meet my *ideas*, whether clothed in proper words or not. It became him to show, that unconverted men could not have a knowledge of their sinful character forced upon them; and that there could not be any sort of conviction of sin, where there was no goodness in the heart. If Mr. B. will show me a sentence in my sermon on depravity, or in any other of my sermons, which, according to the sense in which he perceives that I use words, either expressly, or by fair inference, denies the total depravity of every son and daughter of Adam, up to the time of regeneration, I will not justify such a sentence, but will retract it as a dangerous error.

Let us now see by what arguments the author of "The Errors of Hopkinsianism detected and refuted," has sought to overturn this doctrine. His first attempt is by complaining that I have misstated the question which was argued upon in the public Debate. He seems to be very sure the question stood thus—*Is man totally depraved until he is justified?* I have now before me, in manuscript, the minutes which were taken in the time of the Debate, and attested by two men mutually agreed upon by the disputants. By these minutes it is evident, that I did not misstate the question. It does not appear, that there was a single attempt made by the disputant on the Calvinistic side of the question, to prove that men were totally depraved until they were *justified*; but until they were *regenerated*. It also appears by the replies of his opponent, that the question was as I have stated it. After complaining of a misstatement of the question, a little further on, he says; "If however you contend that the question is as you

have stated, whether or not men be totally depraved before *regeneration*, I drop the above distinction," &c. p. 69. But did Mr. B. "drop the above distinction?" I think it likely that when he wrote the quoted sentence, he intended to do it; but nothing is more evident than that he went on to reason just as if the question had been according to *his* statement. In page 71, he says, "The point in debate then is, not whether men are totally depraved, when they come into the world, and while destitute of all the benefits of Christ, but whether they remain so until they are *justified*, pardoned or accepted in the Beloved; for I understand these terms synonymously." A few lines further on he says, "If I comprehend your meaning, by *regeneration*, you mean the same as *justification*, or pardon of sin." If so; why did he wish to have a different statement of the question from that which I made? A little further on he says, "You make repentance and faith *subsequent* to justification, and not *antecedent* to it." Here again my antagonist writes as if he confounded *regeneration* with *justification*; or as if he could perceive no difference between the two. He confounds the two again, p. 74; "If then all are enlightened, and yet all are not *regenerated*, then sinners are enlightened before they are *justified*." See again page 76; "He is not *totally blind*, *totally dark*, and *totally* under the *power of Satan until* justified." Again; "That a sinner is convicted and heartily sorry for sin *previous* to *justification*, is abundantly manifest from scripture." Again on the next page; "That a sinner must repent before he is *justified*, is equally evident from scripture." The argument is continued on the next page; "Inasmuch therefore as repentance *precedes* the blotting out of sins, a sinner must repent *before* he is justified." After two or three sentences we have this; "But a man *totally* depraved has no such light, nor any such grace; and therefore he is not totally graceless, or depraved *until* justified." Among other quotations to the same effect, I will select one more—it is on the 84th page: "From the preceding arguments it appears plain that a sinner has grace to enlighten his understanding, to awaken him to a sense of sinfulness, to work in him a godly sorrow for sin to enable him to repent of it, and to enable him to believe

in Jesus Christ, *before* he is *justified*—and this is the point contended for in the debate." To all this I reply, This *is not* the point contended for in the debate: and all this labor of our antagonist, to prove that men do not remain totally depraved *until justified*, might have been saved; for we believe it as fully as he can.* Justification is an *act* of God's free *grace*; regeneration is a *work* of God's *spirit*. We are justified through faith, therefore faith is antecedent to justification. It is the *penitent believing* sinner whom God *justifies*; but he *regenerates* the *impenitent* and *unbelieving* sinner; and this regenerating power of God is the very thing, which makes him become a penitent, and a believer.† Regeneration effects an alteration in the heart, and consequently in the *character* of the sinner; while justification alters his *condition*, with respect to the divine law. Before he is regenerated his heart is totally sinful, having no love to God; but after regeneration he is possessed of some holiness, the love of God being shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. Before he is justified, he is under the curse of the law, being condemned already; but after he is justified, he is freed from condemnation, he is now not under law, but under grace.

We do not pretend to say, that regeneration and justification are things which are wide apart, as to the time of their taking place; but they are terms which communicate perfectly distinct ideas, and the one is as much antecedent to the other, as a cause is antecedent to its effect. In the golden chain of grace, given us by Paul in the 8th chapter of Romans, these are two distinct links, and they are placed in the same order in which we have now placed them: "And whom he *called*, them

* It is a little strange that when Mr. B. came to review what he had written, he did not discover that he had not at all met the question, as it was stated in my Sermon, and as he had once consented to have it stand. See Letters, p. 69.

† I know some have understood Rom. iv. 5, in such a sense as to imply that God justifies men in an unrenewed state. But this is far from being the sentiment of Mr. Bangs' antagonist. He fully believes, that in the sense of the passage now referred to, all the redeemed church now are, and always will be viewed as *ungodly*, and as such be justified wholly by grace.

he also *justified.*" *Called*, in this text, manifestly means effectual calling, which is but another way of expressing regeneration, or the new birth. And this holy calling is what prepares the way for justification.

Mr. B. complains, p. 72, that it was difficult to understand what I meant by regeneration. I am truly surprised, that an Arminian should be put to it to understand what a Calvinist means by regeneration. It would not be strange if we on our part, should be put to it to understand what *they* mean by regeneration or a change of heart, who deny the *entire* sinfulness of the unregenerate; for how can a time be fixed on, from which to date the spiritual birth of that man, who has always had some spiritual life, even before he is born of God? But we who hold, that all the unrenewed are totally depraved, up to the moment of regeneration, find no difficulty in telling what we mean by this change. It is no more difficult than to tell what we mean by the resurrection of Lazarus, or by the opening of the eyes of the man born blind.

I would here ask, Why did Mr. B. have such an exceeding desire to shift the question from *regeneration* to *justification*? Was it to avoid coming to the point? Did he not know that we should not contend that men were totally depraved until *justified*? Is it not altogether better to come to the very point wherein we differ? otherwise we shall make trouble and expense to our readers, without their receiving any profit.

I shall now just glance at some of the arguments of my antagonist which are designed to prove that it is not true, that all the unregenerate are totally depraved.

What he says, p. 68, about the constant shortening of the time of the public debate from the time it was agreed on, until it actually took place, has no force as an illustration for the purpose for which it was introduced; unless he considered us as holding, not only that the sinner is as totally depraved the moment before he is regenerated as ever; but also that he is then, even in point of *time* just as far from the change as he ever was. On the next page he begins another illustration, which is good, if properly applied. By the greater privileges which the Americans have under their new government, he would illustrate the merciful

circumstances in which we are placed by the coming of Christ. True, our circumstances are very merciful. Light is come into the world, but until we are regenerated, our character is not changed; for we evidently love darkness rather than light. That very part of our world, on which the Sun of righteousness, in the most proper sense, arose, is not represented as being thereby meliorated as to the state of their hearts, except those who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. The *privileges* of the Jews were then great,—never so great before; but their *hearts* were not any better. That generation which saw the Saviour, and heard the good tidings of salvation from his own blessed lips, were more intolerably wicked than the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.

We believe that the interposition of the Redeemer, has put all mankind into a *salvable* state, but not in a state of *salvation*. All mankind have not a little holiness imparted to them, by reason of the interposition of the Redeemer; but are described as being wholly dead in sin, until by a regenerating power they are quickened and made alive. By a *natural state*, it appears that Mr. Bangs means, the state which man was in, without any Saviour provided; by a *natural state*, *we* mean, the state which sinners are in, before their hearts are changed by the Spirit of God. We also believe, that these two states, as our *character* is respected, are the same. As we understand the scripture, an unrenewed man has nothing of the nature of holiness in his heart, any more than he would have had, if no Saviour had been provided. What do our opponents mean by that grace which God gives to those who still remain unregenerate? Do they mean that it is some degree of *holy* affection?—that it is something of the same nature which is given in the new birth? Why then do they not call it the new birth? But if they mean something which falls short of the nature of holiness, why do they bring it in to disprove the total depravity of the unrenewed?

This initial grace which precedes the new birth, Mr. B. considers as being necessary to render it consistent for God to require our obedience. His words

on this subject are these: "The *foundation* of our obligation, is the relation in which we stand to God and his creatures—but he never can, consistently with his nature as a just and benevolent being, require the fulfilment of this obligation without affording all proper assistance. Moreover, it is utterly impossible in the very nature of things, to require us to see without light, to hear without sound, or to love without grace." p. 79. If the divine character cannot be saved, without giving up *total depravity*, then surely it must be given up. But where is the force of the argument which we have to meet? 'We are *obliged* to God as his creatures; but he cannot require us to fulfil the obligation without affording all proper assistance.' But what is proper assistance? In the next sentence we learn that it is *grace*. How much grace is proper assistance to render us obliged? Must it be enough to make us actually comply with the obligation? But this would be regenerating grace. All grace which falls short of making us fulfil our obligation, after all, leaves us in a state of entire depravity. Mr. B. represents it to be inconsistent, that we should be required to love without grace, as to see without light, or hear without sound. But let him remember, that those who preach that sinners are totally wicked, do at the same time declare, that the true light shineth, and the gospel trumpet is sounding. They therefore add, Open your eyes and see; open your ears, and hear the joyful sound. Perhaps it will be replied, "But your doctrine says, We have no eyes, we have no ears." This is a mistake. Our doctrine says, Sinners have eyes, but they see not; and ears, but they hear not; for their eyes have they closed, and their ears have they stopped.

According to the scheme of our author, if Christ had not been provided for man, his obligation to love his Creator, would have forever ceased; or if the obligation had remained, he could not consistently have required the fulfilment of it on our part. Those very wicked men of whom Mr. B. speaks, p. 94, who in this world are given over to a hard heart and a reprobate mind, so as to be properly denominated *totally depraved*, as they are now destitute of grace, cease to be under obligation to love God; at least they cannot now

consistently be required to fulfil their obligation. But is not such a system manifestly false, which amounts to this; that the more wicked men are, the less obligation they are under to be otherwise than wicked?

Mr. B. urges this as an argument against the total depravity of all the unconverted, that those are said to receive the word, out of whose hearts the wicked one catcheth it away. He says, "Was this word good? You dare not say, no" p. 74. I answer, that I do not wish to say no. The word which the Son of God spoke to *Satan* was good, when he said, *Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* But this *good word* spoken to Satan, did not make *him good.* And the way-side hearers are no more represented, as opening their hearts to receive the word in the love of it, than Satan opened his heart to receive it. Nor does the foolish virgins lighting their lamps, prove that they were not entirely destitute of holiness. Their entire destitution of holiness is implied in their having *no oil* in their vessels.

One of Mr. B's. objections against our doctrine, is on account of the bearing which it has upon infants. He says, According to your doctrine, the infant of a day old is equally involved in guilt and condemnation, with the *sinner an hundred years old.* p. 86. Mr. B. had just said concerning infants; "True, they inherit a corrupt and depraved nature from Adam." So say we. And to the question, How corrupt? we answer, *totally* corrupt. We do not say that the infant a day old is as great a sinner, as the one an hundred years old; but his nature is as *wholly* corrupt. And we add, The infant of a day old *as really* needs a renovation of nature, as the aged sinner. We do not hold however, (at least *I* do not) "that any of them shall be finally and eternally miserable, *merely* because Adam sinned." p. 93. It is my belief, that none will be punished in the future world, except those who are *personally sinful*, and only in proportion to their personal ill-desert. *Every man shall be put to death for his own sin.* Deut. xxiv. 16. See also Ezek. xviii.

In my sermon on depravity, I acknowledged there was a work preparatory to the new birth;—that by

awakening and conviction, things were preparing in divine providence, for the sinner to see himself entirely sinful and ill-deserving. Remarking upon this, Mr. B. says, p. 87, "Pray, Sir, what things are preparing? Is the Lord now only preparing the atonement, or the work of redemption?" Is it indeed so unintelligible what things are preparing, provided the atonement is already made? Are not sinners, even under the gospel, *stupid*, as well as depraved? And is it a matter of no importance that they should be aroused out of this stupidity, and see on what a slippery steep they go? They have not, perhaps, heretofore believed that their hearts were fully set to do evil, and at enmity against the God of heaven. Is it not a matter of importance, that they should be convinced of this? and is it not important that they should be convinced of this before the Lord does this great work for them; even to raise them from the dead? This awakened sense of danger, and this conviction of total depravity, may be called a preparatory work, not because there is any moral goodness in it; nor because there is any necessary connexion between such a work, and the work of regeneration; but because it is that which precedes regeneration, whenever that change is wrought; and because it prepares the way for those who are born of the spirit, to see and admire the exceeding grace of God in their conversion. But let the awakened sinner be told, that he is growing better; and this will have a dreadful tendency to check his conviction, and to lead him to a false hope. His conviction is greatly promoted by his being shown that he resembles the diseased woman in the gospel, who was spending all her substance upon physicians, and was growing no better; but rather worse. As the benefit which the woman obtained by her physicians, was not this, to be healed by them, but only to be convinced of the obstinacy of her complaint, and of her great need of a better Physician; so awakened sinners, by all their self-righteous attempts to obtain salvation, are often brought to a deeper conviction of their depravity, and to a more feeling sense of their perishing need of an almighty Saviour. The convictions which precede the new birth, are no part of the

healing of the sinner's wound; yet, like the probe of the surgeon, they search out and discover its depth.

As it is probable, that many of my present readers have never seen the Sermons, on which Mr. B. animadverts, it may not be improper, before I close the present section, to state the heads of the arguments which were introduced in the second Sermon, to prove *the total depravity of all unrenewed men.* The arguments made use of were arranged under *six* distinct heads.

I have repeatedly read through the Letter of my antagonist, which was designed as a confutation of the doctrine contained in that sermon, and I do not see that he has attempted to reply to all these arguments; or that he has even fairly met one of them, and shown its inconclusiveness.

The *first* source of proof made use of was this, viz. *plain and unequivocal declarations of scripture.* To these scripture declarations he has not replied: he has not shown that I have mis-quoted or misinterpreted them. There was one text introduced in the sermon, which, it was supposed, the Arminian would bring in opposition to our doctrine, to which he attempted some reply. He made no attempt to refute the *second* argument which we brought to prove, that the depravity of all men in an unrenewed state is *total;* namely, that it is said of those who are in this state, that they *cannot please God.* The apostle expressly says, Rom. viii. 8, *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.* He does not attempt to show that the unregenerate are not in the flesh: Nor how it can be, that men who "cannot please God," can have something better than depravity and enmity of heart. In the *third* place, the entire sinfulness of unrenewed nature was argued from the dreadful crimes which are charged upon our race, as upon one complex person, which is represented as tho' it were moved and actuated by one heart and one soul. *The heart* of the sons of men, (as tho' we all had but one heart,) is said to be fully set to do evil. If any ask, in view of the wickedness of their fellow-men, "Are we better than they?" the answer to be given is, "No, in no wise." The difference between unrenewed men is *circumstantial,* and not radical and fundamen-

tal. There is no doubt, a difference, as to the degree or strength of depravity, among those creatures who are shut up in the prison of hell, tho' they are all entirely destitute of holiness. And among the wicked in this world of mercy, there is a very great difference, as to their acting out their depravity in the commission of crimes, according to the different degrees of restraint which God lays upon them. Yet when they are made to see the plague of their own heart, sinners of all descriptions are convinced, that they are entirely sinful,—that they have never been kept back from committing sin, from any love to holiness. I do not perceive that Mr. B. took any particular notice of this class of arguments. The entire sinfulness of an unrenewed state, was in the *fourth* place, argued from the Bible description of the total unacceptableness of the *most specious works*, which are performed in that state. It was shown, that not only the plowing of the wicked is said to be sin, but also their *sacrifices* and *prayers*. See Prov. xv. 8, 29: xxi. 27, and xxviii. 9. I do not find any place in his Letter, where he attempted to look this argument in the face. If he had attempted it, he must have made such a distinction between the wicked, as would contradict that very plain and pointed declaration of the Saviour: "He that is not *with* me is *against* me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Mat, xii. 30.

The *fifth* argument which was made use of, to support the doctrine of the entire depravity of the natural heart, was derived from what the scriptures say concerning the necessity of a *change* of heart. They speak much of a change, which is *fundamental* and *instantaneous*. It is represented as so fundamental, that it is the *beginning* of a new life. The subject of this change is represented as being *born again*; or as being *raised from the dead*; or as being *created anew*. The character of the sinner must undergo an essential change, to warrant these scripture representations. That the change is not only fundamental, but *instantaneous*, is evident from such considerations as these: 1. All mankind are, through the whole Bible, put into two moral classes; the *righteous* and *wicked*, *saints* and *sinners*, *lovers* and *haters* of God; those who are *with* Christ,

and those who are *against* him; those who are *born* of God, and those who are *not born* of him. If these two moral classes include the whole of mankind, then it will follow, that no period of time can be taken up, in passing from the bad to the good class. If we do not belong to the good, we must belong to the bad; if we do not belong to the regenerate, we must belong to the unregenerate; unless it should be found, that the word of God describes a third class of men, who are neither converted nor unconverted.

2. It is evident that the word of God makes this change, which we call the new birth, absolutely necessary to our being prepared for heaven. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." But it is very obvious from scripture, that all men are, at this, and every moment, candidates for heaven or hell. But if any period of time, even one second, were to be occupied in effecting the transition from one state to the other, during that period, the subject of the change would be a candidate for neither happiness nor misery.

According to *our* views of depravity, it is not at all difficult, to tell what the scriptures mean by regeneration. It is the *beginning* of holiness in a creature rendered totally corrupt by the fall. It is a *new heart* and a *new spirit*: it is a *new creature*;—it is the *commencement* of spiritual *life*, where before there was nothing but spiritual *death*. Now, we must either give up our belief of any such fundamental change in the human character, or we must retain our belief of the entire sinfulness of every unrenewed heart.

We are persuaded, that our theological opponents must give up the doctrine of regeneration, as applied to any particular part of a man's life, and as distinguished from progressive sanctification in believers, or adopt the doctrine of the total depravity of all the unregenerate. If they made regeneration to mean the same as perfect sanctification, or the expelling of *all* depravity from the heart, then we could see how a date might be fixed to regeneration. On this supposition it would not be a *fundamental change*, like being changed from death to life; from *sin* to *holiness*; but it would be

something, which could be distinguished from the antecedent work of the spirit, as it would be the bringing of the work to a perfect state. But in their books they speak of perfect sanctification as subsequent to the new birth. They do not consider all who are born of God, as having obtained to perfect holiness; nor all who are not born of God, as entirely destitute of holiness. Now we wish to know, when a sinner who has *some holiness*, may be considered as having holiness enough, to denominate him a *new creature*. This is no curious speculative point. It is highly interesting, that it should be determined with precision. If we be created anew, we are in Christ Jesus, and have the promise of heaven; but if we are not created anew, we are under condemnation; and dying in this state, we shall be miserable for ever. If *some holiness*, *some conformity* to God, be no evidence that I have passed from death to life, I anxiously demand, How much holiness, how much conformity to God must I possess, to denominate me a new-born soul? Going on the ground of the total sinfulness of the unregenerate, the question is easily answered: We can say to the anxious inquirer, If you have *any holiness*, any conformity to God, you are a new creature, you have passed from death unto life.

Mr. B. has no where in his book, as I can discover, described this moral change, unless this be describing it, to say that it means the same as justification. In opposing the sentiment, that all unconverted men are entirely sinful, he takes pains to show, that in their unconverted state they have *grace*, and *light* and *conviction*; and of course that they cannot be entirely sinful. Did he mean to say, that this grace, and light, and conviction effected a change in their nature, before they experienced the great change of the new birth? If so, why does he not put the new birth back as far as to that change of nature? But if he did not mean to say, that this grace, light and conviction effected a change in their sinful nature, why does he bring them forward, to disprove the total depravity of the unconverted. We believe, as well as they, that God is very merciful and long-suffering towards the wicked—that they are greatly favored with divine restraints, whereby they are pre-

vented from much external wickedness, which they would otherwise commit; this we are willing to call *restraining grace:* We also believe, that God enlightens their understandings with his truth, and awakens and convinces their consciences by his Spirit; but believing all this, does nothing towards destroying our belief of the total depravity of their hearts, even up to the moment of regeneration. Mr. B. says, p. 72. "Indeed, if I understand your meaning upon this subject, —you make the first dawn of spiritual light upon the human heart, to be regeneration." When light is put for holiness, then I surely believe, that the first dawn of it upon the human heart, is regeneration But when light means any thing besides holiness, I believe there may be not only a spark, but a full blaze of it, and yet the heart remain unrenewed. We are far from calling the first serious impressions, of which sinners are the subjects, by the name of regeneration. No, we believe, that sinners may not only be seriously impressed, but even deeply weighed down with conviction, and spend all their time in reading their Bible, or in the closet and in religious meetings, and still possess, to perfection, that carnal mind which is enmity against God, and would dethrone him, if it were armed with sufficient power.

We now demand of those who deny the total depravity, or entire sinfulness of the unregenerate, whether we err in representing regeneration as a *radical* or *fundamental change?* If we do not, why does not the reality of such a change, prove the entire sinfulness of those who have not experienced it? We cannot see why the argument, derived from the real and fundamental *change* produced by regenerating grace, does not conclusively prove, that before this change, there is *no* holiness in the heart. Now, we do not find that Mr. B. made any direct attempt to show that this argument was not conclusive.

Another argument which was made use of in the Sermon, to prove that none have any degree of holy affection, except the regenerate, is this; That the promise of eternal life is made to the *least degree* of holy affection, and yet is evidently made to none but the re-

generate. This argument my opponent takes some notice of in a Note, pp. 72, 73. To show that I am wrong in confining the promise to the regenerate, he quotes Isa. lv. 7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon." "In these words," he adds, "the promise of pardon is made to the wicked, on condition of their returning to God." Did Mr. B. understand me to say, that while men were in an unrenewed state, they did not, and could not know, that there were any promises contained in God's word? or that these promises were not held out as any inducement to *them* to turn to God? If he did understand me so, no such thing was intended. We well know, that God promises to the greatest and most hell-deserving sinners in the world, that if they repent, they shall be forgiven; if they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, they shall be saved: but while they remain impenitent and unbelieving, the *promises* are not *theirs*. They cannot plead a single promise as belonging to them. They are children of wrath, being under the sentence of condemnation. In the gospel, commands and promises are so connected, as perpetually to keep this idea in view, that the promises do not belong to us, unless we obey the commands. No one can suppose that all the sinners in the world have a right to claim the promise of forgiveness, because they are all told, that if they repent, they shall be forgiven. The promise is as it were, hid behind the command—when by the spirit of obedience, we come up to the command, we then find and enjoy the promise. He who has evidence that he has complied with divine requirements, may plead with God, as David did; "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope."

Having explained our meaning, let the argument be weighed. The question now is, whether the promise of eternal life be made to any sinner who is not born of God—who has not become a new creature—who has not passed from death to life? Does he possess, or can he possess any thing, while he remains unrenewed, which will entitle him to one of those promises which ensure eternal life? Has not the word gone out of the

mouth of the faithful and true Witness, " Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." But while it is manifest, that promises of divine favor are not made to the unregenerate, it is equally manifest, that they are made to those who possess any degree of holy affection.—Promises of divine favor are made to those who *love* God—to those who *repent* of their sin—to those who *trust* in Christ, and to those who *love the brethren*, so as to give them a cup of cold water because of their relation to christ. If the love to God; if the repentance and faith, and brotherly kindness, do but partake of a holy nature, they will meet the divine approbation, and take hold of the promises, and will in no wise lose their reward, though they do not come up to the standard of sinless perfection. Now if the promises are made to those, who have holy love to God, without specifying the degree, then it follows; that those who cannot claim the promises, have not the *least degree* of holy love, and must therefore remain totally depraved. Our opponents do not pretend, that perfection in holiness is indispensably requisite to justification, and the promises of eternal life. The question will then arise, how much holiness must a sinner have to become interested in the promises? If our doctrine of total depravity be not true, the sinner has some holiness before he is regenerated; how much holiness does regeneration add to him, so as to place him within the promises of the covenant of grace.

Let not my readers view the doctrine before us, as a speculative point, which is of little consequence how it is decided. There is no doctrine more deeply interesting to us all. It is concerning our own character, that we have been *inquiring*. It is granted on both sides, that this character is bad. But how bad, is now the question. If it be totally bad, we must know it, or the ignorance of it will probably be our ruin. The word of God seems to make it essential, that we should *know every man the plague of his own heart*. I. Kings, viii. 38. If the unregenerate view themselves as any thing better than *entirely sinful*, their attention to religion will be apt to resemble the conduct of the man, who thinks his old house is too good to pull down.

Such a man will spend his time and money, in repairing his old house, when, if the frame and foundation are completely defective, his labor and money will be lost. In this case, it is important that the man be made acquainted with the true state of his building, that he may turn all his attention to the erecting of a new one which alone will defend him against the winds and the rains and the floods which may unexpectedly come upon him, while he is attempting to patch up his rotten and *irreparable* house.

SECTION III.

A VINDICATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF PERSONAL ELECTION, BEING A REPLY TO OBJECTIONS RAISED AGAINST THIS DOCTRINE PARTICULARLY IN MR. BANGS' THIRD LETTER.

MR. BANGS' Third Letter is designed to expose my erroneous sentiments on the doctrine of election, or, as it is otherwise termed, Predestination. The text which was taken to bring into view this doctrine, was Rom. ix. 11, *For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.* The doctrinal proposition which was supposed to be contained in this text, was thus expressed; *The purpose of God, in choosing some creatures to enjoy eternal happiness, in distinction from others, is not founded upon their good works, and will therefore invariably stand.* In handling the doctrine, it was attempted to be shown, I. That election is not founded on works; II. That God's purpose of election will never in a single instance, be frustrated, but will always stand.

Mr. B. in the commencement of this Letter says, "Your laboring to prove that election is not founded upon *works foreseen*, is calculated to impress the reader with an idea that we believe it is." Certainly I did suppose that Arminians, whether in the Methodist, or Presbyterian church, believed that election was founded on *works foreseen*; nor did I hear any thing offered by Mr. B. in the public Debate; nor do I see any thing in his Letters, to lead me to alter the opinion which I had formed. I would turn the readers attention to one

or two sentences on the 120th page: "He also knew that the Gentiles would believe in Jesus Christ, and *therefore* he determined before the foundation of the world, to call them by the gospel, and give them an offer of salvation." "Those among the Jews whom he foreknew would embrace the Lord Jesus, he did not reject, any more than he did the believing Gentiles." Introductory to these sentences he had said; "To this objection the apostle opposes his doctrine of election, *predicated of God's prescience.*" Now put these sentences together, and is it not clear, that Mr. B. makes the election of some sinners to eternal life, whether Jews or Gentiles, to turn on the point of their *foreseen works*, by which they will distinguish themselves from their fellow sinners?

By *works* in the controversy about election, we do not mean *merit*. In this sense, works are excluded from the whole of a sinner's salvation. In the eye of the law, the sinner who is perfectly sanctified, is nevertheless without works, and as such he is justified freely through the redemption which there is in Christ Jesus. But when works are considered as the fruit of the operations of the Holy Spirit, all the regenerate have good works. Repentance and faith are holy exercises, and may be called good works. A life of prayer and obedience to the commands of God, it is scripturally proper to call good works. Now the question is whether these good things which are within us, or done by us, are the reason of our being put into the number of God's elect. We believe, that the reason why one sinner is *forgiven*, in distinction from another, is that he *repents*; and why one sinner is *justified* in distinction from another, is that he *believes* on the Lord Jesus Christ: He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned. Repentance and faith are not *meritorious*, but they are nevertheless conditions of our being forgiven and accepted in the Beloved. But are these also conditions of our being chosen in him, before the foundation of the world, *that we should be holy?* Are they the conditions on which God predestinates sinners to be conformed to the image of his Son? The gracious work of renovating our hearts, is not suspended upon conditions. God does not say, If

sinners will repent and believe, I will change their hearts. The apostle to the Ephesians declares, that it was when they were *dead* in sin that God quickened them. That he might effectually cut off boasting and lay them all in the dust before God, he lets them know, that their good works were *subsequent* to their new creation, and were wholly the fruit of it: *Not of works, lest any man should boast: for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.* By *works* in this text the apostle does not mean merit, but those holy fruits which all real christians bring forth. So that it is obvious, that the apostle designed to teach those to whom he wrote, that there was nothing good or holy in them, which was the reason why they were created anew in Christ Jesus, since all their good works were *posterior* to their conversion, and wholly the fruit of it. We can all see that it would be altogether unsuitable for God to forgive an impenitent sinner, and be at peace with one in a state of unbelief; but there is nothing unsuitable in God's giving repentance to an impenitent sinner, and working faith in an unbeliever; or, in the words of the apostle, in creating them in Christ Jesus unto these good works. So there is nothing incongruous in God's electing sinners unto salvation, considered as entirely depraved and destitute of all good distinctions. And to us it is apparent, that this is the view which the scripture gives of the doctrine; while it is equally apparent, that this is not the view which the Arminians entertain of it.*

* Let us look for a moment at the book of Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This book most manifestly builds electing love on good works foreseen; else, what is meant by the following sentence? "The scripture tells us plainly what predestination is; it is God's fore-appointing *obedient* believers to salvation, not without, but according *to his foreknowledge* of all their works *from the foundation of the world.*" Doct. and Discip. p. 75. Mr. Wesley, who is the acknowledged penman of these remarks on predestination, says; "If the elect are chosen through sanctification of the Spirit, then they were not chosen before they were sanctified by the Spirit." Again, "If the saints are chosen to salvation, through believing the truth, then they were not chosen before they believed the truth." p. 74. How can it be, that Mr. Wesley and his followers, should understand that passage in 2 Thess. ii. 13,

Let it be remembered, that all the sinners whom God has chosen to salvation, are, according to the economy of redemption, to be made partakers of his holiness. They are chosen through sanctification of the

so differently from us? To us the passage has no appearance of giving an idea, that sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, precede election, as the cause precedes the effect; or as the motive precedes the action produced by it. Here follows the passage: "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." Can any one, who has not previously made up his mind on this subject, entertain the thought, that the apostle meant to say, That God from the beginning chose these persons to salvation, because he foresaw they would be sanctified by the Spirit, and that they would believe the truth? Is it not much more natural to understand the apostle to say, That God from the beginning chose them to enjoy eternal salvation in heaven; and, as means to prepare them for this everlasting rest, determined to sanctify them by his word and Spirit, and thus bring them to love and obey the truth? The plan of God is perfect and consistent. He has not chosen the elect to salvation, without determining to prepare them for that salvation. The vessels of mercy are to be admitted to heaven; but they are to be afore prepared unto glory. Rom. ix. 23.

On the same page with the sentences last quoted, Mr. Wesley says, "How plain is it, where St. Paul saith, that they whom God *did predestinate, according to the counsel of his own will, to be the praise of his own glory*, were such as did *first trust in* Christ? And in the very next verse he saith, that they *trusted* in Christ *after they heard the word of truth*, not before. But they did not hear the word before they were born. Therefore it is plain, that the act of electing is *in time*, tho' known to God before; who according to his knowledge, often speaketh of the things *which are not as tho' they were*." The passage which Mr. Wesley refers to, is in the first chapter of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. To us it is not at all plain that those, whom God is here said to have chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, having predestinated them unto the adoption of children, according to the good pleasure of his will, and according to the purpose of his wise counsel; were such as trusted in Christ before they were predestinated; so that this trusting in Christ was the reason why they were chosen in him. It is true, that after the apostle had spoken of God's electing love, and predestinating purpose, he adds, "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who *first* trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." Eph. i. 12, 13. Did the Ephesians on reading this epistle obtain the idea, that the apostle meant to tell them, that they trusted in Christ *first*,

spirit, and belief of the truth. But this sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth, are not what drew forth the electing love of God, but are produced by electing love, carried into operation. That this is the

before they were chosen in him that they should be holy? Does not the apostle rather speak of two companies of believers, as both having an interest in the same Almighty Saviour; but that one company obtained this blessed privilege at an earlier period than the other, having *first* trusted in Christ: in whom the others *also* trusted afterwards? The Jewish converts, of whom the apostle was one, belonged to the first class of believers; and then unto the Gentiles also was granted repentance unto life. They both trusted in the same Redeemer; but the Jewish converts trusted in him *first*;——afterwards the Gentiles trusted in him when they were made acquainted with the gospel. It seems as if our opponents could not help discovering, upon a review of this passage, that Mr. Wesley did mistake when he made the word, *first*, in the 12th verse, to give to their trusting in Christ an earlier date than to the predestinating purpose of God concerning their salvation. However tenacious they may still be of their peculiar sentiment, it is hoped they will candidly acknowledge, that it is not strengthened by this particular passage.

But it is objected by our theological antagonists, That there is more than one passage, where predestination is explicitly ascribed to foreknowledge, and made to rest upon it. The first passage objected to us, is Rom. viii. 29, *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.* Another passage is 1 Pet. i. 2. *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.* I think it is evident, that in neither of these passages is predestination, or election, made to depend on the foreknowledge of any thing good in us, as the cause of our being chosen. In the one passage we are said to be predestinated *to be conformed*, and not because it was foreseen that we should be conformed. In the other we are said to be elect, or chosen, *unto obedience*. There is nothing appears in either of these passages, which indicates a design in the inspired writer, to oppose *good works foreseen* to the sovereignty of grace in predestination. But there are passages, where there is an evident design, to oppose sovereign electing grace to all the works of men. As a specimen of such passages, take the following: Rom. ix. 11. "For the children being not yet born; neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to *election* might stand, *not of works*, but of him that calleth:" v. 16, "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God who sheweth mercy." 2 Tim. i. 9, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, *not* according to *our works*, but ac-

view which the word of God gives of the subject, will, I think, appear by attending to these few arguments.

1. The date of electing love is in eternity. We are never said to have been holy, or to have been converted from eternity, or from the foundation of the world; nor have been forgiven and justified at so early a date. But those who are saved, are said to have been *chosen* in Christ before the foundation of the world; and to be chosen from the beginning. Eph. i. 4. 2 Thess. ii. 13.*

cording to his *own purpose* and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began." Titus iii. 5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

It will now be demanded by our opponents what can be meant by God's predestinating those whom he *foreknew*, and electing according to his *foreknowledge*. Foreknowledge seems most naturally to mean a previous knowledge of that which will certainly come to pass. When foreknowledge is used in this sense, it is, in the order of nature, posterior to the divine purpose; as a thing cannot be known to be about to come to pass, which is not fixed. But it would seem, that in the passages now under our consideration, foreknowledge must be used in a sense somewhat different. Predestination, tho' an act of sovereignty, is not a foolish unadvised act. Infinite knowledge is employed in fixing upon the *number*, and the *persons* of those who are to be redeemed from the earth by the blood of the Lamb. Whom God foreknew, or foresaw, it would be for his glory to save, he predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son. The election of this sinner, and of that sinner, and of the whole congregation of those who shall be benefitted by the death of the Son of God, was according to an infinitely clear and comprehensive knowledge, which the eternal Being always had of that which would be most conducive to the interests of his holy and blessed kingdom.

* As to the *eternity* of God's purpose of election, Mr. Wesley seems to think he has found a complete solution of the whole difficulty, in those words of Paul, Rom. iv. 17,——*And calleth those things which be not as tho' they were.* See Methodist Doct. and Discip. p. 73. Within the compass of but a little more than one page, he repeats this passage six or seven times, as if it were sufficient to repel every thing which could be said in favor of the eternity of the divine purpose.

It may be proper to devote a little time to examine into the force of this all-destroying argument. I will put down the whole verse in which the above quoted clause is found: *(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations) be-*

2. Regeneration or the new birth is the beginning of holiness in the hearts of apostate men, but when election and regeneration are both brought into view, election is represented as preceding it in natural order; as

fore him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as tho' they were. "Observe," says Mr. Wesley, commenting on this passage, "God speaks then, at that present time, to Abraham, saying, *I have made thee a father of many nations*, notwithstanding Abraham was not at that time the father of one child but Ishmael. How then must we understand, *I have made thee a father of many nations?*" Mr. Wesley's question is easily answered, by those who believe that God has an immutable purpose about all future events, and that he brings all events into existence according to his purpose. It was proper for the Most High to say to Abraham, "I *have made* thee a father of many nations," if he had *purposed* that it should be so. And the fixedness of his purpose concerning that, and every other event, makes it proper that he should speak of them, before they actually exist, as if they had already happened. For it is as certain that his purpose will unfold in the event, as that it now exists in his own mind. Therefore it becomes the lips of the one only living and true God, to "declare the *end from the beginning*,—— saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure— I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have *purposed* it, I will also *do* it." Isa. xlvi. 10, 11. "I have made thee a a father of many nations," i. e. "I have purposed it, I will also do it." Therefore, tho' it be not yet done, God speaks of it, as if it were done; and thus he calleth things which be not, as tho' they were.

Now if it be the *purpose* of God concerning future events, which makes it proper for him to speak of them as tho' they had already happened, then Mr. Wesley's text, which he has chosen to counteract the eternity of God's decrees, has no tendency to do it. The *event* is spoken of as already existing, because the existing decree makes its futurition certain: but this cannot be the reason why the *decree* is spoken of as certain, unless we suppose some other decree gives certainty to this; which will lead us back to one decree which gives certainty to all the others. Christ is *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*, because he was from everlasting set apart in the counsel of God for a sin-offering. "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." 1 Pet. i. 20. It is proper to say that Christ was *slain* from the foundation of the world, because he was even then *foreordained* to the death of the cross. But what can be the reason why he is said to have been *foreordained* to this, before the foundation of the world, only that it was actually so, that he was thus foreordained? And what can be

appears in the following passages: "And we know that all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are *the called* according to his *purpose*.——Moreover whom he did *predestinate* them he also *called*." Rom. viii. 28, 30. *Calling*, in both these verses, manifestly means that gracious and effectual call, which brings wanderers back to God. In the 28th verse it is placed before the purpose of God, but is said to be *according* to his purpose; which clearly implies, that the purpose was first. The same is implied in John vi. 37. "All the Father giveth me shall come to me." Mr. B. thinks that because the word *giveth* is in the present tense, it makes nothing for our doctrine. But it is evident from this passage, that in the order of things, the giving of them to Christ, *precedes* their coming to him—i. e. election, in its natural order, goes before effectual calling or the new birth. But in a parallel text, John xvii. 2, we find the verb is in the past tense: "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou *hast given* him." It is also in the past tense in the 6th chapter, verse 39: "That of all which he *hath given* me," &c.

3. The Spirit which moved upon the holy men who wrote the scriptures, most manifestly designed to teach, that God's predestinating grace was *free* and *sovereign*,

the reason, why the saints are said to be *chosen in* Christ *before the foundation of the world*, only this, that in this early period they were *appointed not unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ?* See Eph. i. 4: 1 Thess. v. 9. If it had been said, that they were *sanctified* before the foundation of the world, we should have been obliged to understand it to refer to the eternal purpose of God concerning their sanctification; that is, sanctified, in the divine purpose; but when they are said to be *chosen* before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy; when they are said to be predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ, and ordained to eternal life; we are immediately led back to the eternal purpose of God concerning their salvation, as the very thing intended by their being chosen unto holiness, predestinated unto a conformity to Christ, and ordained unto eternal life. God calls the events of his providence, which have not yet transpired, as tho' they were, because his decrees give them a certain future existence: But he calls his decrees, as tho' they *were*, because they *are*, and have been from everlasting.

and not for the sake of any thing good foreseen in those whom he predestinated. This is clearly taught in the text which gave rise to my sermon on the doctrine of election. "That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth." The same subject is in view, verse 15: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." It is continued in that part of the chapter which follows. In the 15th chapter of John, Christ evidently designed to humble his disciples, by saying, "*Ye* have not chosen *me*, but *I* have chosen *you*." Mr. B. makes it mean this; "Ye did not select me as the Saviour of the world." p. 116. Is this as natural as to suppose he meant to say, 'I came to my own professing people, in the character of the Saviour of the world, and they received me not; and you were by nature no better than they, and would not have chosen me, if I had not first chosen you?' The purpose of election, and the good works of men are put in contrast, 2 Tim. i. 9, "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began." Notice, 1st. The calling is *holy*; or in other words, regeneration is a holy change. 2ndly. There are no works in us before this holy change, which have any accordance or agreement with it. Forgiveness *accords* with that repentance which takes place in us before we are forgiven. But nothing before the new birth, exists in us, or is done by us, which has any such relation to the new birth, as repentance has to forgiveness. 3dly. But this holy change accords with something else, namely, with God's own purpose and grace, which were given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. Here God's own purpose concerning the salvation of such, as had now become subjects of grace, is spoken of, in distinction from their works, as a reason why they were called. Now if this purpose to call them into the kingdom, were in view of works foreseen, such as their repenting and turning to God, there would be no foundation for the contrast between the *works* of those who are called, and the *purpose* and *grace* of God.

Mr. B. seems to acknowledge God's sovereignty in the election of one nation, in distinction from another. P. 99, he says, "The apostle proceeds to show that God as a Sovereign, elected the Jews to be his people, without any regard to their worthiness or merit."—— "This election," (that is of the Israelites to their distinguished privileges,) "depended solely on the sovereign pleasure of God." p. 102. By its depending *solely* on the *sovereign pleasure* of God, I conclude, that our author meant to exclude their works from having any influence in their election.* If works are thus excluded from *national* election, why is it not analagous, that they should be excluded from *personal* election?

But my antagonist wholly denies *personal election*. In his preface he says, "Personal and individual election and reprobation appear to have been strangers upon earth in the apostles' days." It seems to be his grand object to get rid of the doctrine of individual election, and this he does by acknowledging God's sovereignty in choosing some nations, to enjoy greater privileges than others. Speaking of Jacob and Esau, he says, "It is evident beyond contradiction, that these words were spoken, not of Jacob and Esau in their individual capacity, but of their posterity. *Two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels*, which plainly refers to the *Israelites* and *Edomites*." p. 101. In this place it may be proper to ask, What was the great point of difference between these two people? They were not only two distinct nations, but they were *two manner* of people. Was it the different soil which they cultivated, or the different degree of civilization which prevailed among them, which made them two manner of people? Or was it their religion? Their religion, no doubt. To Jacob's posterity Jehovah says, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." Christ says, "Salvation is of the Jews." Mr. B. acknowledges that Jacob's posterity were, by the sovereign pleasure

* That this is his meaning is made manifest from what we find in the Appendix, p. 309: "These favors were not granted them (i. e. the Jews) because they were any better by nature than others, but were bestowed according to the sovereign pleasure of God."

of God, elected to peculiar privileges,—and that these were *religious* privileges, for to them were committed the oracles of God. Now let it be remembered, that these privileges were necessary to salvation; for "where no vision is the people perish." Salvation was of the Jews, and not of the Gentiles. Here then the sovereign election of Jacob's posterity, in distinction from Esau's, did most intimately relate to the things of eternity, and to the salvation of souls from eternal ruin. The posterity of Jacob were elected in distinction from the posterity of Esau, at least for a considerable period then future, much the same as the race of Adam was chosen to salvation, in distinction from fallen angels. So that I think we may with propriety repeat the sentiment which we advanced in the Sermons; "If election and reprobation appear bad when applied to Jacob and Esau, as individuals, they must appear vastly worse when applied to them as the heads of two great nations."

In the Appendix, p. 309, when Mr. B. in making some comment upon Rom. ix. 21, concerning the potter's having power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor, he observes; "The obvious meaning of the apostle is, that as the potter makes some vessels for more honorable uses than he does others, so God has raised up some nations, the Jews, for instance, formerly, and now the Gentiles, who are called to the exalted privileges of christianity, to higher dignity, and for more honorable purposes, than he has others" Is this the apostle's obvious meaning? How came he then, in the next two verses to say: "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath filled to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" Has not the apostle, in these two verses, evidently given us an example of the two kinds of vessels which the great Potter makes, some unto honor, and some unto dishonor? And are these vessels *nations?* And is the honor and dishonor *national?* Do we go to glory, or to destruction, as nations, or as *individuals?* The vessels of wrath are

fitted to destruction, and the vessels of mercy are prepared unto glory. Is it not evident, that Mr. B. mistook the meaning of the text concerning the potter and the clay? And have we reason to think, that in the 15th verse of the same chapter, when God is introduced as saying, that he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, it ought to be confined to men, considered only in a national capacity?

The author of the Letters thinks he oversets the idea of a personal election, by showing that the posterity of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, were denominated the *elect*, or chosen people of God. He observes that the apostles adopted the same phraseology with respect to the Gentile churches, denominating all the members of the visible church, the *elect*, the chosen people of God. See Pref. pp. 8, 9. I do not conceive, that this militates at all against the doctrine of particular election, as it is held by Calvinists. The church under both dispensations is called *Israel*; but the apostle says, All are not Israel which are of Israel. Here the word Israel is used in two senses; according to one sense, it means the whole nation or visible church; and according to the other, it means such as are what they profess to be. The word *Jew* is used in these two senses, else the apostle would not have said, He is a Jew, which is one *inwardly*. The whole visible church is called the people of God; and yet *people of God*, is sometimes used in a more appropriate sense, to point out those who have a holy union to Christ. The word *saint* is expressive of sanctification, and yet this word is applied to the whole visible church; as appears in this passage, Psal. cxlviii. 14, "He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his *saints*; even of the *children of Israel*, a people near unto him." The apostle addresses the whole church at Rome as beloved of God, called to be *saints*. He has similar addresses to other churches. Now will any one pretend, because the terms, *Israel*, *Jews*, *people of God*, *saints*, *believers*, *brethren*, &c. are sometimes used in application to the whole visible church, that therefore they are never used in a more appropriate and confined sense? And is it not just as unsuitable to argue against personal election, because the whole visible

church is called elect? As the apostle made a spiritual Israel within the visible Israel, so he evidently made a real elect to exist among the chosen people. "Even so then at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.——What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but *the election* hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." Rom. xi. 5, 7. Here *the elect*, do not mean the nation of Israel, but those from among the nation who obtain the salvation of Christ. Their embracing the gospel, does not seem to be spoken of as the cause of their election; but as taking place according to the election of grace. Here then is an *elect number* within an *elect nation*. Tho' all the members of the visible church may be considered as visibly the elect, yet they are reminded that this does not of itself make their election sure. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure;" 2 Pet. i. 10. Jesus Christ, when speaking of the impostors which should arise, declares, "They shall deceive, if it were possible, the very elect." By *the very elect*, it is evident, he did not mean the same as the church of Israel, or the same as the christian church, but that he meant the real elect, who were called with a holy calling, not according to their works, but according to the purpose and grace of God. Notwithstanding what my antagonist has said, I cannot think that *personal* election was a stranger on earth in the apostle's days; any more than personal calling, personal sanctification, and personal justification. Was it only in a national capacity, that men were then called; and in a national capacity that they were justified, and glorified? No, it was particular persons who were called, justified and glorified; then it was *particular persons* who were *predestinated*; for whom he did predestinate, them he also called, justified, and glorified. See Rom. viii. 30.

Having shown that the purpose of election relates to the salvation of sinners, and that it relates to them in their individual capacity; and also that the purpose of election is not grounded on good works foreseen—we now proceed to notice briefly some of Mr. B's. objections to our doctrine, which have not already been noticed. I. He thinks that the manner in which Paul

introduced the ninth chapter to the Romans, by declaring the great concern which he felt for the salvation of his kindred, proves that he did not believe in the doctrine of unconditional election. "Can it be supposed," says Mr. B. "that he felt such an opposition to the eternal decree of God, respecting the reprobation of the Jews, that he wished himself accursed from Christ, if he could thereby prevent its execution?" p. 100. To this difficulty it may be replied, 1st. Divine decrees do not take away *feeling*, either from God, or his friends. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked man who dieth. Even when *the decree has brought forth*, and the command is given, "Bind ye the unprofitable servant and cast him into outer darkness;" even then, he has no pleasure in his death. To punish, is his *strange work*. The Saviour wept over Jerusalem, devoted to destruction by the righteous judgment of God. After the God of Isaac had declared to the prophet Jeremiah his fixed purpose, to send his people into captivity, and thus cast them out of his sight, and had said, *Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me; for I will not hear thee;* the prophet said, *Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.* Such feelings as these were perfectly compatible with a reconciliation to the revealed purpose of God concerning that sinful nation. The Lord was not displeased to see his servant so full of feeling on this occasion. These feelings were ever the fruit of that *divine* nature of which he had partaken. Things which are *naturally* or *morally evil*, holy beings are never pleased with for their *own sake*. They could never be reconciled to either class of these evils, except in view of the good which these evils are made the means of promoting. God is pleased with that scheme of providence which contained in it the death of his only begotten Son, not because he was pleased with seeing the agonies of his Son or the malice of his murderers, but because of the great good which he designed to bring about by the natural evil which he endured, and the moral evil which they committed. God is pleased with his scheme of providence, considered as one great

whole, though it included this natural and moral evil: but does it hence follow, that he was pleased with these evils for their own sake? To suppose him pleased with the agonies of his dear Son, when viewed by themselves, and for their own sake, would be to suppose him to be cruel, and even cruel to him, with whom he was well pleased. To suppose him to be pleased with the murderous spirit of his crucifiers, would make the most holy God to be no better than Pilate, Herod, and the Jews. There is therefore a complete foundation for the distinction now made, between being pleased with, and reconciled to, things in their *consequences*, and being pleased with them, on their *own account*. Christ was reconciled, all things being taken into view, with the casting away of the Jews, and yet the feelings of his heart, in view of this event by itself considered, were well expressed by his flowing tears, and by his compassionate exclamation—"If thou hadst known, even thou in this thy day the things of thy peace!" Paul's compassionate feelings for the Jews, and desire for their salvation from sin and ruin, as in itself a great natural and moral good, are very strikingly expressed in the beginning of the 9th, and again in the beginning of the 10th chapter of his epistle to the Romans. But this did not imply that he wished, on the whole, to have the divine purpose changed, even as it respected the casting away of the Jews. His reconciliation, and even his triumphant rejoicing in the whole scheme of divine providence, not excluding the blindness in part which had happened to Israel, are equally manifest. It is when he is just closing this solemn subject, that he exclaims, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!—For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen."

A 2nd reply to the difficulty is this; It was the duty of the apostle to seek the salvation of sinners, while he found them in this world of hope. God has a sovereign right to have mercy on whom he will, but it is our duty to seek the salvation of all. The commission given to the servants, is, "As many as ye find, bid them to the marriage." Those who believe in the certain fore-

knowledge of God, cannot expect that more will be saved, than the number foreknown; and yet they seek the salvation of all. I would ask, Do they mean to frustrate the foreknowledge of him, who is without any variableness or shadow of turning.

Let it be further considered, that though Paul knew it was the purpose of God to cut off many of the natural branches from the olive tree; yet he did not consider all prayers and labors for the salvation of the seed of Abraham to be utterly in vain. He hoped still that he *might save some of them.*

II. One objection which Mr. B. raises against the doctrine of personal election, especially as drawn from our text, is *the badness of Jacob's character*, particularly before his conversion. He says, "Let any man of candor impartially examine the two characters of Jacob and Esau, and he will find as much to applaud, at least, in Esau, as in Jacob, previous to the conversion of the latter, which appears to have happened on his way to *Padan-aram.*" p. 104. Grant this to be correct, and how does it furnish any argument against our doctrine? We do not pretend that the elect are, before their conversion, any better than others. On the contrary, we say that God, in choosing them to be monuments of his grace, has no respect to any good distinctions which exist in them:—that they are not chosen *because* of good works, but *unto* good works. What Mr. B. says about these two brothers, seems to confirm, instead of tending to weaken our doctrine of unconditional election.

From something which I find in Mr. B's. book, in close connection with the last quotation, I am led to conclude that he does not understand us when we speak of election as being *unconditional.* He has this sentence; "If, because Jacob is called the elect of God, he were elected to eternal life, without any regard to his faith and obedience, &c." Further on he says, "The question is not therefore as your readers might infer, whether our election to eternal life be predicated of *works* or *grace;* but whether the grace of eternal life, be unconditionally bestowed on some, and whether all the rest be unconditionally reprobated to eternal death, without any respect to their wicked works." p. 108. Now it is a matter of first importance, that writers in controversy, es-

pecially in theological controversy, should not misunderstand, or misrepresent each other's sentiments. I have already shown, that by *works*, in the controversy concerning predestination, I did not mean the same as *merit*, but that I understood our opponents as building predestination on good works foreseen; such as repentance, faith, and new obedience. I would now ask, whether the quotations from Mr. Bangs' Letters, which have just been made, are not calculated to give his readers a wrong view of our sentiments? He says, "The question is, whether grace, the grace of eternal life, be unconditionally bestowed on some?" I think this is far from being the question. God bestows the grace of eternal life on none but penitent believers, but he bestows the grace of repentance and faith on those who are dead in sin; in consequence of which grace, they become alive, and now exercise repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Let every reader understand, that Calvinists no more believe, that God has promised to admit men to heaven, without their being prepared for it, than the Arminians do; but Calvinists fully believe, that God has determined to prepare some men for his heavenly kingdom, without making something good, on their part, the condition on which he will begin this good work of preparing them.

III. One great objection which Mr. B. brings against the doctrine of personal election, is, that it implies *personal reprobation*. We acknowledge that it implies this. And his system of national election, necessarily implies national reprobation. If the posterity of Jacob, in distinction from the posterity of his brother, were chosen to enjoy the special privileges of revealed truth, and divine ordinances, then the posterity of Esau, in this thing, were reprobated, i. e. they were not chosen to these privileges. Now why are not the minds of our opponents embarrased with such a reprobation as this, seeing it so directly led to their eternal ruin?

The Arminians, as well as the Calvinists, believe that a part of mankind will be eternally wicked and wretched; and that the omniscient Being from eternity foresaw that it would be so. They must therefore acknowledge, that notwithstanding he saw what their end would be, he chose, all things considered, to bring them into

existence. But they will say, The wickedness and wretchedness of the damned were not his ultimate end in their creation. And so say we; though my antagonist supposes us to say otherwise, as will appear by what follows; "We have no authority therefore for concluding that God made Esau on purpose for destruction. Were we to allow that he was wicked as was *Cain*, it no more proves that this was the ultimate *end* of his existence, than it does that God can lie." p. 107. *Ultimate end*, must mean one or other of these two things; either *first*, that chief and highest end, the best good, or that which is most worthy to be proposed by all intelligent beings, as their supreme object: or *secondly*, it must mean something which is desirable for its own sake, so that, though it be not the supreme good, still it is such an end as to make it suitable that certain other things should be subordinated to it. To these subordinate things it is an *ultimate* or last end. Bodily health, for example, is a real good in itself considered, when contrasted with sickness and distress. We send for a physician, and take unpleasant drugs, to the end that we may recover health. In this instance, recovery to health is an end, to which we subordinate other things, and to these other things it is an ultimate end, tho' it ought not to be the *chief* end; for there is something of more importance than our bodily health. It could not be, in any sense, proper to say, that the *ultimate* end of obtaining a physician was to get some of his bitter drugs, though this is the *immediate* end we have in view by obtaining him. An ultimate end must be some good upon which the mind rests, as that which serves, at least in some measure, to compensate for the use of means or subordinate ends for its attainment. If this definition of *ultimate end* be in any measure correct, it is very far from us, to represent the destruction of the wicked, as God's ultimate end. It is not his *chief* end, that is certain, for his own glory is his chief and highest end. "He hath made *all* things for *himself*; yea even the wicked for the day of evil." Prov. xvi. 4. Here is the very thing concerning which we are now making inquiry. Here are the wicked, and here is their destruction, and God is said to make them for the day of evil, which is the same as the day of destruction;

but their destruction is not spoken of as his chief end—he has made *them*, among other things, *for himself*, that is, for his own glory. The greatness and holiness of God will be more displayed by having such characters, and by having them punished for their sins, than to have had no such characters, and to have had no such punishment.

The destruction of the wicked is not only, not God's *chief* end; but it is not in any sense an *ultimate* end. The holiness and the blessedness of the righteous are *an ultimate end.* The Lord rejoices over his redeemed church with joy, and rests in his love. He delights in his people, and he delights in their blessedness. He has promised that all things shall work together for their good. God does not, in the same sense, delight in the destruction of the wicked. *As I live saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.* Ezek. xxxiii. 11. The doctrine of reprobation does not suppose, that God made the wicked "*on purpose* for destruction," nor that this was the *ultimate end* of their existence; because this would imply that their destruction is looked upon by the Divine Being as a good in itself, and chosen for its own sake, whereas nothing is wider from the truth. Pharaoh is a striking example of the doctrine of reprobation; but it is not intimated, that his Creator made him on purpose to destroy him, or that his destruction was the ultimate end of his existence. The representation is, that he was made on purpose to be the means of a more extensive display of divine glory. "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." Rom. ix. 17. The same kind of reason is given in the 22nd verse for the reprobation of all that die in their sins, viz. that God might show his wrath, (his holy opposition to sinners) and to make his power known, (i. e. his power to punish rebels, and thus maintain the government of the universe.)

Under the article of reprobation, I shall make some reply to a perversion of my sentiments, which our author has made by means of an imperfect quotation from the Sermons on this point. "It is not," say you, "as-

signing a sufficient reason for their reprobation, to say, they were wicked, and would not accept of mercy." Now sir, either you, or Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul, are mistaken. Paul saith, "The wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience, *because* of their wickedness." *You* say, This is not a sufficient reason, *Paul* saith," &c. p. 112. After continuing this subject for a little while he demands, "Are then Dr. Hopkins and yourself wiser than Jesus Christ, and his servant Paul!" Did the author of the Letters understand me to say, that something besides wickedness was the *guilty cause* of the destruction of the wicked? Or to say, that their wickedness was not a sufficient reason of their *deserving* punishment? That the reader may have opportunity to judge concerning the correctness of the sentiment which Mr. B. thinks so opposite to the sentiments of Paul and of Christ, I will quote the whole sentence, a part of which is quoted in the Letters. Here follows the whole sentence: "It is not assigning a sufficient reason for their reprobation to say, that the reprobate were wicked, and would not accept of mercy; for this was equally true concerning those who are saved, until by the power of God they were made willing to submit." Did not my antagonist apprehend what I meant by a want of sufficiency in the reason? Does not the last part of the sentence make it perfectly evident? And to all who believe, that God has power to make rebels willing when he pleases, there must be force in it. It is well known that we believe, the Almighty has power to bring all the rebels in the world over to his holy standard. If this sentiment is correct, then it is evident, that it is not assigning a sufficient reason for their everlasting punishment to say, They were wicked and would not accept of mercy. It is assigning a sufficient reason for their desert of punishment, but not for their being treated according to their deserts, seeing millions of their fellow sinners will not be treated according to *their* deserts. If it should be said, their fellow sinners repented; it is true, through the grace given unto them they repented; and why was not this grace given to all the sinners in the world? It must finally be resolved into this, that it was not for the glory of God to bring them all to repentance, and

in this way to admit them to the joys of heaven. We are told that it was in the *wisdom of God*, that the world by wisdom knew not God. 1 Cor. i. 21. Their being left for so long a time to make experiment of the insufficiency of human wisdom, issued in the destruction of many myriads; and yet the wisdom of God saw it best that it should be so. And this will apply to the reprobation of all who are lost.

Mr. B. thinks, that on the Calvinistic plan, there can be no consistency in God's punishing the reprobate, seeing they are made use of to promote his glory. I would ask, whether it is not agreeable to the word of God, and also to the common sense of mankind, that an evil design deserves evil, though that evil design should be overruled for God's glory? May not the supreme Judge say to all his enemies, as Joseph did to his brethren, "Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it for good? We do not suppose that sin has the least *tendency* to promote the divine glory and the good of the universe; but that its tendency is to dishonor God, and do infinite mischief among his works. This is its tendency, and its immediate effect; but He, who is great in knowledge, power, and mercy, brings good out of the evil. No thanks are due to evil-doers. Mr. B. seems to think, that on our plan, the reprobates are deserving more reward than the elect. He says; "And most certainly that which is the *cause* of the greatest good, must have the *greatest merit*." p. 131. Our sentiment is not, that sin is the active cause of any good; nor that it is made more use of than holiness in promoting general happiness: but this is the sentiment which we are not ashamed to avow before heaven and earth, viz. That the infinite God will make use of *sin*, (deformed and pernicious as it is,) in connexion with every thing else which exists, to make the display of his glory the brighter; and in that way to increase the perfection and blessedness of the created system. The author of the Letters seems to suppose our sentiments, if true, would take away the torments of the damned, because they would know that God was glorified by means of their sin. Has he forgotten, or did he never know, that the carnal mind is enmity against God? Will such a mind be relieved by knowing that

God is glorified? This is no new difficulty; it is noticed by the apostle, Rom. iii. 5–7—*Why then am I judged as a sinner?*

Mr. B. labors to show that the word *reprobate* means nothing more than sinners who are destitute of grace. I have no doubt but the word is so used, and I will not say, that this is not the invariable meaning of the Greek word which is rendered, *reprobate*. But the *doctrine* may be true, as we have stated it, though it be not proved by this word. If some are chosen, or elected, out of the world, as the scriptures declare, then those from among whom they are chosen, are *not elected*. The very idea of some being chosen, in distinction from others, supposes the others not to be thus chosen. The apostle writing to the saints at Thessalonica, says, "For God hath *not appointed us* unto wrath; but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thess. v. 9. But Peter speaks of some who *stumbled at the word, being disobedient*—and then adds; *whereunto also they were appointed*. And Jude speaks of certain ungodly men who turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, and declares that they *were before of old ordained to this condemnation*. Mr. B. has a criticism on the Greek word which is translated *before ordained*; (see page 314;) but it does not destroy the force of the passage, as the doctrine of reprobation is concerned. Concerning the treachery of Judas, one Evangelist says, "The Son of man goeth, as it is *written*;" and another says, "As it was *determined*." *Fore-written* and *fore-ordained*, when applied to God, amount to the same thing.

IV. The author of the Letters objects against God's ever fixing his electing love on any sinner, making the greatness of his sins an *occasion* of it. In my sermon on election, it was said; "*Some* of the greatest of sinners are saved. Paul mentioned the greatness of his sin as one reason why he obtained mercy, that he might be made a pattern of great grace." Mr. B. thinks this sentiment to be very wide from the truth, and of dangerous tendency. "O sir, what a dangerous sentiment you have advanced! Paul obtained mercy because of the greatness of his sin! Let us sin then, may all blasphemers say, that grace may abound. Paul obtained mercy because he was a great sinner. Well then, says

a correct reasoner, the same *cause*, under the same circumstances, will produce the same *effect ;* I will therefore be a great sinner that I also may obtain mercy," p. 115. If I should say, that God suffered *some* sick persons to advance to the very jaws of death, before he interposed with his healing mercy, and that he did this, to make his hand the more visible, would it follow as a just consequence, that in all cases, the hopes of recovery were in proportion to the violence of the disease ? The idea which I intended to communicate is well illustrated by the case of Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary. *Then said Jesus unto him plainly, Lazarus is dead. . And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent that ye may believe.* John xi. 14, 15. Jesus knew of the sickness of his friend Lazarus ; but he did not interpose to raise him from the bed of sickness ;— he chose rather to raise him from the grave. The number which he raised from death was few, in comparison to those whom he raised up from sickness ; but we know that in the case of Lazarus, he chose to display his power of raising from death, rather than in raising from sickness. In the sermon it was not intimated, that the greatest sinners were more frequently chosen to salvation than others. But this at least ought to have been intimated, to have laid a foundation for the inference, which Mr. B. declares is a legitimate consequence of our doctrine. But he ought to have noticed that I said, " *Some* of the greatest of sinners are saved." And if he read the whole sermon, he must have met with these sentences : " I know it is said by some, that the greatest profligates are most frequently taken hold of by divine grace. This is quite far from being true, though God sees fit to suffer *some* of his elect to go great lengths in sinning, before he brings them into his fold." Sermons, p. 70. Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, I supposed to be one of these great sinners. This is the account which he gives of himself. " This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ; of whom I am chief. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." 1 Tim. i.

13, 16. I know that he had previously told us why his sin was not unpardonable, namely, that when he was a blasphemer and persecutor, he did it ignorantly in unbelief. But though he had not committed the sin unto death, which could not be forgiven; yet he viewed himself as the chief of sinners. And it is very manifest, that he considered himself as having obtained mercy, that Jesus Christ might in him, as in a mirror, make a most striking display of his long-suffering, and the exceeding abundance of his grace, not as an encouragement to others to continue in sin, but as an encouragement to the very chief of sinners to fly for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them. In this view of the subject, I cannot see that it is a false or dangerous sentiment, to say, that the *greatness* of Paul's sin, was one reason why he obtained mercy, that he might be a pattern of great grace.

V. Mr. B. objects to Acts xiii. 48; *And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed*; as contributing any thing to the support of our views of election. Instead of reading the text, *ordained* to eternal life, he would read it *disposed*, or *well disposed* for eternal life. To support this reading, he quotes the *French* translation. To this it may be replied, that the New Testament was not first written in the *French* language. He has a lengthy quotation from Dr. A. Clark, who labors to do away the force of the Greek word which is translated *ordained*. And it undoubtedly needs much *labor* to make *tetagmenoi* signify the good disposition of the mind.

VI. Mr. B. objects against the doctrine of personal election; That it makes God *partial* and a *respecter of persons*. He says, "It is not possible, sir, to rescue your doctrine from the charge of partiality." p. 142. Those who can have access to the Sermons are referred to what they will there find on the subject from the 67th to the 69th page.

Respecting, *regarding*, and *accepting of persons*, are scriptural phrases of similar import, and intend the same thing which is now more commonly expressed by *partiality*. Let us now look at the text where these phrases occur, as applied to the Divine Being, and it will help us to understand what God himself intends,

when he declares that he is no respecter of persons. In 2 Chron. xix. 7, it is said; "For there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts" This is given as a reason why the judges should judge impartially, and not take any bribe to blind their eyes; for the supreme Judge was impartial, and took no bribe or gift to blind his eyes. God, acting as a judge, decides according to *character*, and according to this alone. "Who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's *work*." 1 Pet. i. 17. Jews and Gentiles, as it respects mere national distinction, stand on equal ground before his judgment-seat. This is proved by Acts x. 34, 35, and Rom. ii. 10, 11; "Of a truth I perceive, that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." "But glory, honor and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God." A great or small intellect will not turn the balance with God; for it is written; "He respecteth not any that are wise of heart." Job xxxvii. 24. There is, in this world, much difference between the condition of masters and their servants; but before the bar of the supreme Judge, this difference vanishes. This is urged with masters as a motive to do their duty to servants: "And ye masters do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him." Eph. vi. 9. It is also used as a motive with servants, to be sincerely obedient unto their masters. "Servants, obey in all things your masters, according to the flesh; not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God—and there is no respect of persons." Col. iii. 22—25.

In Deut. x. 17, 18, it is declared that God *regardeth not persons, nor taketh rewards*, and then it is added, *He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow*. In Job xxxiv. 19, the phrases *regarding*, and *accepting of persons*, both occur, and are evidently of the same import as respecting of persons: "How much less to him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor." Before

the impartial tribunal of the great Judge of quick and dead, the prince will stand on a level with his subjects, and the rich will have no pre-eminence above the poor.

Another thing implied in God's accepting no man's person, is this, that he condemns all which is wrong in his own children, and even in those who have had the most distinguished place in his family. When Paul was about to speak of the dissimulation of Peter and of others, who seemed to be *pillars*, he introduces it by saying, that *God accepteth no man's person.* Gal. ii. 6.

I have been particular in bringing these scriptures into view, because I know that our doctrine is very commonly said to be in opposition to the *impartiality* of the Divine Being. 'I do not believe in the doctrine of election,' says one, and another, 'because I believe that *God is no respecter of persons.*' This we also believe, and yet believe in election. And now I would ask my candid reader,—Is there any thing in these texts, all of which are so express in declaring, that God is no respecter of persons, and that he regardeth not, and accepteth not persons; which asserts, or even *intimates*, that he has not chosen some sinners, to be made monuments of his grace, in distinction from their fellow-sinners? What does the Most High mean to express, when he says, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy?" Exod. xxxii. 19. Would this language become him, when seated on the judgment seat? "I will be just to whom I will be just?" In the treatment of characters already formed, the Supreme Judge is as much bound to go by a prescribed rule, as a subordinate judge: and because he always does go by rule, and by the same rule, in judging both princes and their subjects, masters and their servants, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, Jews and Gentiles, therefore he is said to be impartial, and to be no respecter of persons. His impartiality leads him to go as exactly according to the *gospel*, in pardoning; as according to the *law*, in accepting of those who have a law-righteousness. He does not say among *penitent* sinners, I will show mercy on whom *I will* show mercy. He has bound himself by a gracious promise to show mercy to all such.

The *sovereignty* of God does not appear so properly, in his *treatment* of the prince and the peasant, as in making the one a prince, and the other a peasant; it does not appear so properly, in his treatment of the rich and the poor, as in making one rich, and the other poor. My opponent, I believe, will not deny but that God's sovereignty is displayed in placing men in the different conditions, in which they are seen in this world. "The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all." Yea, "The Lord *maketh poor*, and *maketh rich*." And does not the scripture ascribe to God the forming of the *character*, as much as the appointing of the *condition* of men? And is not this the place where his sovereignty is most remarkably displayed? "Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" The sovereignty of God is displayed in making such a choice as he does, of the the vessels of mercy. Mr. B. acknowledges the *sovereignty* of God, in choosing the *nation* of Israel to their distinguished privileges. This he must suppose consistent with the declaration, *That God is no respecter of persons*. If he can tell how the universal Father can place such distinguished privileges in the hands of one nation, and leave the other nations to the gross darkness of paganism, it will not be very difficult for me to show how he can choose some *individuals* in such a favored nation, to become real subjects of his grace.

VII. Another objection which I shall notice, is this; 'That the doctrine of *particular election* does not harmonize with the doctrine of a *general atonement*.' In page 148, Mr. B. says, "Did Christ make atonement for those for whom God the Father never had any thoughts of mercy? Does not this scheme of yours set God the Father, and God the Son at variance?"

To this it may be replied, that if an atonement for all mankind, implied an intention that all should become *actually* interested in it, then it would not be in harmony with the doctrine of particular election. It was the intention of Christ to make a full atonement for the sin of the world; and the Father intended the same. The Father designed to apply the benefits of the atonement to the elect only; and with this the Son

was perfectly satisfied. God designed that all the angels and also the first parents of mankind, should have an opportunity to be everlastingly blessed on the foot of the covenant of works; but he did not design that they should all improve that opportunity, and never fall. So God has designed to give all the race of Adam a new and gracious probation, by means of the atonement; but he has not designed that all should actually improve their probationary state, so as to be saved. God designed by the atonement to declare his righteousness, and put a stigma upon the transgression of his law, so that he could be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. By this means he designed to set open the door of mercy before this fallen world, so that he could say to us all, "Return unto me, and I will return unto you." But this does nothing towards determining how many are chosen to salvation. The supper was made for all who are invited to it; but it does not follow hence, that all who are invited will taste of the supper. To give appetite for this supper is another favor, over and above that of making the provision. The first favor does not bind to the bestowment of the second. Our antagonists, tho' they believe in a general atonement, do not believe it will be universally applied; why might we not say, Here is a want of harmony in their sentiments? If they say, It is the fault of those who are not benefitted by the atonement; so say we. If they say, God would receive them to favor, if they would come to him through Christ; so say we. If they should say, 'But you hold, that God provided an atonement for creatures whom he *never designed* should reap the benefit of it,'—we can say the same of them. If they should proceed to say, 'But God could not make them to partake of the benefits of the atonement, without destroying their moral freedom;' to this we should not agree. For we fully believe, that the hearts of those who are never saved, are in the hand of the Lord, and that he could make them also willing, if he saw this would be for the general good. "God so loved *the world*, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." But all the world was not chosen in him, that they should be made holy; if so, they would

all most certainly be made holy: For this is the Father's will, that of all which he hath given to his Son, he should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. See John vi. 39.

I shall notice one more objection, which I find in the Letters, against the doctrine of particular election, and the consequent doctrine of reprobation; it is this; 'That our doctrine is very discouraging—that it blocks up the way to heaven; and that fewer will be saved, *with* such a doctrine as personal election, than *without* it.' Mr. B. in an address to impenitent sinners, p. 147, says, "There is no horrible decree of reprobation to stop your path." In another place he says, "We will be content if we can save some of your imaginary reprobates, which you erroneously and unbelievingly consign to eternal torments before they were born." p. 130. I would ask the author of the Letters, How he knows when he has saved some of our reprobates. He cannot know that they are to be saved until they become believers,—until they exhibit evidence of the new birth. But if they exhibit evidence of the new birth, they also exhibit just so much evidence, that they are not reprobated, but that they were given to the Son as his elect seed: For none come to him except those which were given to him; and evidence of their *calling*, is always just so much evidence of their *election*.

The Arminians are always representing our doctrine as discouraging, and very unfavorable to the salvation of the fallen race. Let us now for a moment examine the matter, and see whether this charge is well founded. They agree with us in believing, that only a part of the race of man will actually be saved. How great a part, as it respects their number, neither of us pretend to be able to tell. We both say, None will be saved except those who repent, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. *We* say, that all such, without any exception, will be saved. *They* will not concede to *this*, for they believe, that many, who have repented of their sins and come to Christ, will notwithstanding fall away and perish. But leaving for the present this sentiment of theirs out of the question, I demand; Wherein their doctrine is more favorable to the salvation of lost men,

than ours? They seem to fancy that *they* can save some who do not belong to the elect, of which we speak. But if they can make sound converts of any sinners whatever, we have no hesitancy in calling them elect. For as it is said, Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; so it is equally true, Whom he called, them he had previously predestinated. Now, if we believe, and preach; that all who come to Christ will be received, and not one of them cast out; if we believe that every penitent will be forgiven;—that every one who is born again will see the kingdom of God;—that every one who calls on the name of the Lord in spirit and truth will be saved;—that every one who has the Spirit of Christ in every nation, and in every church, will be accepted of him, and will finally be admitted to be with him in his kingdom, to behold his glory; how can our doctrine be charged with being contracted, and unfavorable to the salvation of sinners?

Those who deny a divine predestination unto eternal life, seem to think that the Divine Being has not done as well by the human race, as *they* would do. But they ought to remember, that God is rich in mercy, and the riches of his mercy will finally appear, not only in the greatness and expensiveness of their salvation, but also in the great and innumerable multitude which was given unto Christ, to be redeemed from the earth by his blood.

We have seen that the doctrine of our theological opponents, has no advantage over ours, as it respects setting open a door of hope in this valley of Achor. Let us now see if our doctrine has not in this respect the advantage of theirs. Mr. B. tells the impenitent; "There is no horrible decree of reprobation to *stop* your path." To this I would add, That according to his scheme of doctrine, there is no merciful decree of election to *open* your path. Your wicked heart has stopped your path. Christ has died, and opened the door of mercy. He has sent his servants to invite you to come; but you have all with one consent refused the offer. You have seen and hated both the Father and the Son. Your hatred is complete. Tho' it is true, that every obstruction to your eternal salvation is re-

moved out of the way, except that which consists in the opposition of your own hearts; still this opposition will ruin you, if God, who is rich in mercy, do not quicken you while you are yet dead in sin. If therefore God had done no more than to set open the door of mercy, and left it with you to enter, when you were disposed, it is just as certain, that you would all go to hell, as if no Saviour had been provided. But unwilling and ungrateful as we rebels are, the Lord hath *purposed* that his Son *shall have* a seed to serve him:—A glorious number of our lost race were given to our Redeemer:—these through grace will be made to come to him. They will be pricked in the heart, while they hear their unholy character pourtrayed. They will look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn. Being born again, they will be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. In view of this free and gracious election, on the part of our offended Sovereign, we are encouraged to preach the gospel to you, and there is encouragement for you to hear it. For it pleases God, by, what the wise men of the world would call, the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe; and to bring the elect to obtain the salvation which there is in Christ Jesus.

Now, if we are correct in our views of depravity, as to the extent and tendency of it;—if men are as destitute of holiness, as a dead body is of life; so that it is proper on this account to say, that they are *dead in sin*;—if it is the nature and tendency of this totally depraved heart, to reject the most gracious offers of eternal life, and to continue to reject them forever; then it is certain, that if God had not determined to conquer some by his grace, overcoming the opposition of their hearts, none would have accepted the offers of life. Wherever the purpose of election has gone forward, this effectual, overcoming grace will follow. The doctrine of election, instead of being a doctrine calculated to discourage, is quite the reverse. It is the foundation of encouragement. We do not mean to say that it is the foundation, in the same sense as the atonement is; but it is the foundation of encouragement, that a glorious number of the ruined race of Adam will, notwithstand-

ing their native opposition to the atonement, yet be brought to build all their hopes upon it. Truth is all calculated to do good; and as we firmly believe in the doctrine of personal election, and personal reprobation, we have no doubt but that God will make use of the doctrine, to promote his holy cause. That the truth may be established in the heart of the writer, and in the heart of every reader, is an object greatly to be desired. I have now gone through with what I proposed on the doctrine of election; and I would now request every reader to search the scriptures, that he may determine whether these things are so.

SECTION IV.

A VINDICATION OF THIS DOCTRINAL PROPOSITION; "THAT GOOD MEN, WHILE THEY REMAIN ON EARTH, "ARE NEVER FREE FROM SINFUL IMPERFEC- "TION;" BEING A REPLY TO SOME OBJECTIONS MADE AGAINST THIS DOCTRINE IN MR. BANGS' FOURTH LETTER.

MR. BANGS' Fourth Letter was designed to detect and refute the errors contained in my Fourth Sermon. The text of this Sermon is Eccles. vii. 20: *For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.* The doctrinal proposition which was supposed to be contained in the text is this; "That good men, while they remain on the earth, are never free from sinful imperfection." In considering this doctrinal proposition, two things were attempted; I. To prove that good men are sinfully imperfect in this life; II. To show the consistency of this divine constitution of things, that it should be so.

To establish the point, that the saints are sinfully imperfect in this life, four arguments were introduced; 1. The religious experiences of the apostle Paul, who was one of the most eminent among the saints, and not a whit behind the first of the apostles. 2. The account given of the christian warfare, as implying a strife between the flesh and the spirit; particularly as this warfare is described, Gal. v. 17. 3. The history of the saints, both as to their inward exercises, and their out-

ward conduct. 4. It was attempted to be established by a few plain unequivocal passages of scripture.

In speaking of the consistency of this constitution of things, to wit, that the saints in this life should remain sinfully imperfect, it was shown, that this plan was calculated to make the saints eternally more penitent, humble, thankful, and every way meet for their heavenly inheritance; and also, that it was calculated to display the whole of the Redeemer's character to better advantage, and thus to make him more precious to them who believe.

Mr. B. complains in the beginning of this Letter, that I have misrepresented their sentiments on the subject of Perfection. If I have done it, I can say, with a good conscience, I did not design to do it. If they do not hold to a *sinless perfection* in this life, I would ask; What did Mr. Bangs dispute about, on the 4th question in the public Debate? In my sermon on the sinful imperfection of the saints in this life, I have this Note in the 103d page: "It has been doubted by some, whether the Methodists really hold to a *sinless perfection* in this life. But the matter is put beyond doubt, that they do hold to such a perfection in this life, by the argument, which they use in their book of Discipline, against the power of death to sanctify. By this argument, the words of which are not recollected, it appears, they do hold that saints in this life are as sinless as they will be in heaven." Mr. B. says, there is no such thing in the book to which I refer. The book to which I meant to refer now lies before me, and is entitled, "The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America." I have just been looking over all which it contains on the subject of Christian Perfection, and am led to think, that it must have been some other book in which I found the argument referred to in the Note; for it is pretty fresh in my recollection, that the argument was managed in this way; —'That we cannot go to heaven without perfect sanctification; but that as death is no sanctifier, we must be sanctified before death; and if it may be a minute before death, it may be an hour, a day, a year, or any other period.' And tho' I do not find this argument thus *extended*, in the book now before me; yet the ar-

gument is most evidently *implied*. In p. 109, Eighth Philadelphia Edition, the question is put; "What is the point where we divide? Ans. It is this: Should we expect to be saved from *all sin* before the article of *death?*" On the next page, it is asked; "But how does it appear, that this is to be done before the article of death?" It then proceeds to give reasons to induce us to believe, that the love of God will fill *all the heart*, so that *there can be no sin there*, before the article of death—that is, while the saints live here in this world. Now I would ask, If the Methodists do not mean to teach, that the saints do in this life arrive at the same sinless perfection as in heaven, why do they state, that the point which divides them from their brethren is this: "Should we expect to be saved from *all sin* before the article of death?" Does not this most obviously imply, that they hold to the same perfection *before* death, which their brethren hold to *after* death? Where then is the misrepresentation of which I have been guilty? There are a number of questions in the 126th page, which show, that I have not misrepresented their sentiments, their book being judge. "Does the soul's *going out of the body* effect its purification from indwelling sin?" This question must mean; Is not the soul as much freed from indwelling sin, before it leaves the body, as afterwards?—i. e. Are not saints living in this world as free from indwelling sin, as they will be when they live in heaven? If it does not mean this, it has no meaning at all which affects the controversy between us; for they cannot suppose, that we hold that death has any power to sanctify. They must know that it is our belief, that it is the *Holy Spirit* who begins, carries on, and perfects the work of sanctification. The question is, *when* the Holy Spirit *perfects* this good work, so that all indwelling sin is removed. There is nothing absurd in saying, that God has fixed upon the article of death, as the time to finish this work, any more than to suppose any other period fixed upon. The Methodists say, that sanctification becomes complete in *this life*. Would it be candid for me to assert, That the Methodists hold, that *this life* is a great sanctifier? But it would be as proper, as it is for them to represent our doctrine as making "*death* act as a purifier; and

so to represent it, as tho' we hold to a "death purgatory."

As soon as the author of the Letters had exclaimed; "O sir, is it fair, is it consistent with that charity which hopeth all things, thus to misrepresent a body of people!" and had also introduced a part of my Note already referred to, he adds; "And pray sir, do you believe in the power of *death* to sanctify? It would seem so by this observation of yours, as also from what you say about Paul's desiring to *die*, because death would put an end to that body of sin under which he groaned." p. 152. Now, I would ask, whether we need go any further for proof, that Methodists do hold, that there are saints who in this life are as perfect, as they will be in heaven? Does not Mr. Bangs' objection just brought, evidently imply, that in his opinion death would make no difference in Paul's state, as *sin* was respected: for if he believed that Paul became more sinless when he left this world, than while he continued in it, what objection could he have to my representation of the cause of his desiring death? I know that the Methodists hold, that the saints are not, in every sense, perfect in this life, as they will be in heaven. They state in their book, that "they *are not perfect* in *knowledge*. They are not free from *ignorance*, no, nor from *mistake*," &c. Discipl. p. 101. However much of this kind of imperfection belongs to the saints, it did not concern my subject. It was only the *sinful* imperfection of the saints, of which my text led me to treat.

I know that Mr. Wesley, in the book of Doctrine and Discipline referred to, and as quoted by Mr. B. says: "Therefore *sinless perfection* is a phrase I never use, lest I should seem to contradict myself." Doct. and Discip. p. 114. If Mr. Wesley did not use the phrase, *sinless perfection*, it is evident that he held to the doctrine. Among other proofs of this, take these two; the first is, p. 104: "Now it is evident, the apostle, here speaks of a deliverance wrought in this world. For he saith not, The blood of Christ *will* cleanse (at the hour of death, or in the day of judgment) but it *cleanseth* at the time present, us living christians, *from all sin*. And it is equally evident that if any sin remain, we are not cleansed from all sin. If *any* unrighteousness remain

in the soul, it is not cleansed from *all* unrighteousness." The other proof is in the 112th page. "What is Christian Perfection? Ans. The loving God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. This implies, that no wrong temper, none contrary to love remains in the soul," &c.

If Mr. B. does not hold to a *sinless perfection* in this life, why has he written me a Letter in opposition to my sermon on the *sinful imperfection* of the saints in this life? Commenting on Isa. vi. 7, he says, "Does not this text undeniably prove the doctrine of a deliverance from sin? Equally in point are the words of the Psalmist, Psal. ciii. 12. *As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.* Observe that this is not spoken in anticipation of what shall be done at *death;* but it asserts what had already been accomplished." p. 184. Mr. B. knows it is our belief, that the *dominion* of sin is put down in the hearts of believers, and that all their sins are forgiven them for Christ's sake; when therefore he demands, "Does not this text undeniably prove the doctrine of a deliverance from sin?" He must undoubtedly intend a *full* and *complete* deliverance from sin. If he did not intend this, it would be nothing more than he knows we also believe. Mr. B. calls our doctrine an "unholy doctrine" and a doctrine "in favor of sin." See pp. 211, 261. But the only reason for calling it so, is because we believe, that while the people of God live on the earth, they are not free from *sinful imperfection.* If Mr. B. views this an unholy doctrine, then it follows, that he does not himself believe in it, but in the contrary doctrine of a *sinless perfection* in this life. This is all, which at present, we wish to prove. Viewing this difference of sentiment as actually existing between us, I shall proceed to confirm the doctrine, laid down in the sermon, viz. *That good men, while they remain on earth, are never free from sinful imperfection.*

Let us first look at the proofs of the doctrine which were exhibited in the sermon, and see whether they are fairly taken out of our hands. Mr. B. seeks to get rid of the force of the text which was thought to furnish the above doctrine, by saying, that Solomon either meant, that "there were none but that sinned against

the Adamic law;" or "he meant those *involuntary transgressions* which, under the ceremonial law, required an atonement." p. 158 I know of no law which requires a less degree of holiness, than was required of Adam This matter we may have occasion to notice in another place. As to *involuntary* sin, I believe there is no such thing: There are sins of ignorance; such was Saul's making havoc of the church. He says, "But I did it *ignorantly* in unbelief;" but sins of ignorance are voluntary. Saul was voluntary in persecuting the church, for he was exceedingly mad against it. *Sinning*, in the text, is evidently contrasted with *doing good*. "There is not a just man upon earth that *doeth good*, and *sinneth not*." If *doing good* is descriptive of the holiness of this character, then his *sinning*, must mean something of a directly opposite nature. We might as well say, that the *doing good*, was only a ceremonial, or involuntary goodness, as to say this about the sinning. Does not the text most naturally, without any forced construction, convey the idea of a sinful imperfection in every good man on earth?

Mr. B. labors exceedingly to prevent our doctrine from receiving any support by the experiences of St. Paul. Yet all which he has said, does by no means convince us, but that in the 7th chapter of Romans the apostle gives us a *christian* experience, in giving us his *own*. I cannot express my views of this experience more concisely, or more to my satisfaction, than they were expressed in the Sermon. "Here the apostle speaks of sin dwelling in him—of his finding a law that when he would do good, evil was present with him—and of a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which was in his members. This led him to make that feeling exclamation, with which every christian is acquainted, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!* If this is the experience of Paul after his conversion, then *he* was a just man who did not live without sin. That this was his experience after his conversion is manifest, 1st. Because he had previously in the 9th verse, spoken of being slain by the law, which is always connected with being made alive unto God: and 2dly. Because these descriptions of in-

dwelling sin, are mingled with those of indwelling holiness. He declares that he did not allow sin—that he consented unto the law that it was good—nay, that he *delighted* in the law of God after the inward man. The chapter closes with this declaration, *So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God ; but with the flesh the law of sin.* If a man can *consent* to, *delight* in, and with his *mind serve* the law of God, and still not be born again, then we do not see why, without being born again, a man may not see the kingdom of God." Sermons pp. 82, 83. Our opponents get over this difficulty, because they do not believe in the entire sinfulness of every unrenewed heart. But this entire sinfulness, is a doctrine as firmly believed by us, as the inspiration of the sacred volume. We cannot view any unrenewed heart, as any thing better than enmity against God, not being subject to his law—neither can it be. Now with such views of the natural heart, can we believe the apostle to be describing his, or any other man's exercises while unregenerate, when he speaks of *not allowing sin*, and of *hating* it, (v. 15.) and of sinning against his will, while he *consented* to the law ? (v. 16.) Can we, who believe in the entire sinfulness of every unregenerate man, think the apostle is describing such a man, when he says, " It is no more *I* that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me ?" (verses 17, 20.) Such a man never did any thing but sin ; and this he has always done with his whole heart. Such a man therefore could never say with any truth, as in the 18th verse, " for *to will* is present with me." The will of the unconverted sinner is totally perverse. Christ says to such ; " Ye *will not* come unto me." Who can believe in any fundamental difference between converted and unconverted men, and yet believe that an unconverted man can say with truth, as in the 22nd verse, " I *delight* in the law of God ;" and as in the 25th verse, " With the mind I myself serve the law of God ?"

Let us now inquire, what objection there is against supposing, that Paul is in this chapter describing his own christian experiences. It is objected, ' that he says, " I am carnal, sold under sin ;" while in another part of his epistle he declares, that to be carnally minded is death ; and that the wages of sin is death.' It is

also worthy of observation; that in this same epistle it is said, "The carnal (i. e. unrenewed) mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." How, (I would now ask,) can it be made to agree with this character of the carnal mind to say, that it *consents* to the law, to which it is not, and cannot, be subject—that it even *delights* in, and *serves* the law of God? If my antagonist should say, But the difficulty is as great on your side as on mine;—I answer, it is not, for we believe that the christian has a mixed character, composed of indwelling sin, and indwelling holiness. The *carnal man*, means the unconverted man; the *carnal mind*, the unconverted mind; but through the remains of depravity in the heart, it is perfectly consistent and natural, that the christian should confess, "I am a sinful man," "I am carnal, sold under sin." The christian is holy, and he is sinful; he is spiritual, and he is carnal; but the unconverted man is not holy, as well as sinful; he is not spiritual, as well as carnal. Therefore while it is agreeable to truth, for the christian to confess, "I am carnal," it is in direct opposition to it, for a graceless sinner, to say, "*I delight* in the law of God, after the inward man."

The author of the Letters thinks there could not be a more palpable contradiction, than to suppose the apostle to be describing his christian experiences, because it would make him declare himself *spiritual* and *carnal; free* and *in captivity* at the same time, Let me ask, will it relieve this difficulty, to suppose the apostle is here describing an unconverted sinner? If the other would be a contradictory character, is not this also? Is there not an entire contrariety between being carnal, and consenting to the law that it is good; between delighting in the law of God after the inward man, and having another law in the members warring against this law of the mind? In fine, is there no contrariety between serving the law of God, and the law of sin? The difference between us is this; he supposes the compounded character exists in the unrenewed man; whereas it is our belief, that it exists only in the renewed man. We suppose that the *sinner* has but one moral nature, and that this is a sinful nature—the nature of an enemy to God: but that the *christian* has two

natures, the one sinful, the other holy ; the one being the remains of his totally corrupt heart, and the other the fruit of a gracious change. Now why should we be considered, as holding to a palpable contradiction, because we suppose this twofold character exists in the regenerate, while those who contemn our doctrine, suppose it exists in awakened sinners ? Let it also be remembered, that they do not pretend to believe, that all the children of God are wholly freed from indwelling sin. If then there are any of the children of God, who are not wholly sanctified, but who have a warfare between sin and holiness in their own breasts, I cannot see why the experience, which the apostle gives us in the 7th chapter of Romans, may not with great propriety apply to them.

The christian warfare, as described in Paul's epistle to the Galatians, (chap. v. 17,) Mr. B. supposes applicable to them only as a fallen people : " For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh ; and these are contrary the one to the other ; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." On looking over this passage, it strikes the mind at once ; that all who believe there is a struggle in the breast of the christian soldier, between nature and grace ; and that he has to fight at home, as well as abroad, will very naturally see this warfare here pointed out. Those who do not believe in any such internal conflict in the heart of the christian, will naturally seek for some other way to interpret the passage. If this were the only scripture in which there was to be found an intimation of this internal conflict, there might be more reason to inquire whether it would not bear some other construction. We have spent so much time in examining into the experiences of Paul, as they are found in the 7th chapter of Romans, that we shall not devote any more attention to the passage which is now before us.

Let us now devote a little attention to those passages of scripture, which were made use of in the 4th Sermon, to establish the doctrine of the sinful imperfection of the saints while on earth. The first passage which was introduced under this head, was 1 Kings, viii. 46 ; " If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not.") Mr. B. supposes the meaning of this text

is this, " There are none but are *liable* to sin." All, it is true, are liable to sin, i. e. in external acts of transgression, because all have sin dwelling in them. Therefore where they are humbled for their sins committed, they are in this same chapter described as *knowing every man the plague of his own heart.* See v. 38. Read the passage, and you will see it implies, that no man, let him be who he will, can pray acceptably to the God of Israel, if he does not have a present sense of the sinfulness of his heart. He must be convinced not only that he *had*, but that he now *has* a sinful heart.

The next scripture proof of the doctrine advanced, was Prov. xx. 9 ; " Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin ?" To this Mr. B. replies ; " If Solomon, in the above passage, meant that none *had made themselves pure*, abstract from the Spirit of grace, and independent of the merits of Jesus Christ, as he unquestionably did, he spoke perfectly according to the evangelical purity for which the scriptures plead." p. 177. Is it unquestionable that this was the meaning of Solomon ; or of the Spirit of inspiration ? To us, such an interpretation appears as unnatural as to say ; that when the apostle John declares, " And every man that hath this hope in him *purifieth himself*," he means, that he does this abstractedly from the Spirit of grace, and independent of the merits of Jesus Christ. To the quotation just made, our author adds ; " To understand him otherwise, is to make him contradict the Psalmist David, his royal father, who said, *I am holy*," &c. The answer to this difficulty is this —David speaks of *initial* holiness, which is common in a greater or less degree, to every child of God; and Solomon refers to *perfected* holiness ; in which sense there was no man could say, that he was pure from his sin.

The next scripture which was brought to prove our doctrine, was Job ix. 20 ; *If I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.* On this text Mr. B. among other things, remarks : " From the whole of his (i. e. Job's) arguments in justification of himself, it is undeniably certain, that he never meant to confess himself " sinfully imperfect," in your sense of the word." p. 178, Is not sinful imperfection confessed, chap. xl 4, 5, " Behold I am *vile*, what shall I answer

thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer: Yea, twice, but I will proceed no further?" Did not Job feel a present and a sinful imperfection, when he said to the all-seeing God, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes?" chap. xlii. 5, 6. That Job had no idea of sinless perfection existing among the children of Adam, is evident from such a passage as this: "But how should man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand." This is contained in the former part of the same chapter, where the controverted text is found. Job ix. 2, 3.

I have endeavored to weigh the force of Mr. B's. explanation of 1 John i. 8: *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* Although at first glance, there seems to be something specious in his explanation, still I think there is on the whole much more reason for adhering to the interpretation which we have already given. The apostle had in the 6th verse spoken of the inconsistency of pretending to have fellowship with the Holy One, and living in sin, which is the thing meant by *walking in darkness*. Living in sin, in the language of the Bible, is living a wicked life, instead of a godly life. In the 7th verse the apostle declares, *If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* But lest any should say, that this cleansing was already perfected in them, so that in their outward and inward man, they were free from all corruption, the apostle throws in this caution in the 8th verse: "If we say that we *have* no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

The text in Jam. iii. 2, *For in many things we offend all*, when examined in its connexion, seems to us most evidently to give the idea of a sinful imperfection, even in the best. The original word, translated *masters*, in the first verse, is *teachers*, or masters in Israel. The apostle dissuades his brethren from ambitiously aspiring to be teachers; and from going in crowds into the difficult, and highly responsible work of the gospel mi-

nistry. He reminds them, that all were imperfect men —all were liable to do wrong—even the apostles themselves did not pretend to be faultless. He reminds them that the tongue was the most difficult member to be regulated, and be kept from offending; and at the same time intimates, that if they had not by much sanctification and self-government, brought that unruly member into subjection, they would be in peculiar danger of doing injury to the cause of truth.

I will now add a few other arguments, which were not made use of in the Sermon, to confirm the doctrine there laid down; and after this, an attempt will be made to refute the principal arguments used by my antagonist, to support this doctrine.

One argument, which seems calculated to establish the doctrine of the sinful imperfection of the children of God in this life, is the representation which the scriptures make of *growth in grace*. "He that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." Job xvii. 9. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Prov. iv. 18. Here the commencement of a work of sanctification in the heart, is compared to the breaking of the day; and the progress of the work, to the gradual prevalence of the light over the darkness, until the sun itself appears. Then it is perfect day. From the breaking of the day until the rising of the sun, darkness and light both exist together, tho' the darkness is continually retreating before the rising light. Our divine Lord, in one of his parables, said, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." Mat. xiii. 33. The kingdom of heaven is the Church of Christ set up in this fallen world, and making gradual progress, until the whole world is filled with the glory of God. The kingdom of heaven is also that holy interest, which is set up in the heart of every one who is born of God, and this will gradually extend its heavenly influence, until the whole heart is sanctified.

Another proof of the saints imperfection in holiness in this life, may be derived from the directions given them to examine and try themselves, to determine the

truth of the work of grace in their hearts. They are commanded to *examine* themselves, and *prove* themselves, whether they be in the faith. They are called upon to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure. The apostle John, towards the close of his first epistle, says; "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life." He had laid down many discriminating marks by which to know a true work of the Spirit, and distinguish it from all counterfeits. The force of the present argument is this; That if the christians had no sinful imperfection, there could be no need of this close search, to determine the genuineness of their religion. If their hearts were *wholly* cleansed from sin,—if their love to God and men were perfect, so that nothing remained in their hearts of a nature contrary to love, there would be no more need of self-examination, to determine their state to be good, than there is need of it among the saints in glory. It is wholly through remaining corruption in the hearts of God's people, and through the imperfection of their obedience, that they can have a single doubt of their interest in the covenant.

Let us now look at the principal arguments, by which our opponents seek to support their doctrine of a *sinless perfection* in this life.*

I. One of their most potent arguments is drawn from the characteristic names, by which the scriptures distinguish saints from sinners. They are frequently called *perfect*. Noah is called a perfect man; Job is called a perfect man, and others of God's children are said to be perfect. 'Now,' say our opponents, 'here is divine testimony, that saints may arrive to a state of perfection in this life: and surely if they had much

* I still consider them as holding to a *sinless perfection* in this life; for if we bring a text to show that saints are *not sinless*, they immediately give it a different explanation, so as to make it mean only that they once were sinners, or that they may again become sinful. What can be more decided proof, that they do believe in sinless perfection in this life? "The moment you acknowledge that a christian may live a day *without sinning*, you give up the point." Letters p. 199.

corruption dwelling in their hearts, *God* would not say they were *perfect*'

This argument ought to be carefully attended to; and if it shall appear to be against our doctrine of sinful imperfection, then our doctrine must be given up, even if this should *un*christian every Presbyterian, and destroy the hope of every Calvinist in the world. I think I have candidly examined the argument, and do not see any thing in it, which militates against our doctrine. The author of the Letters does not hold to the sinless perfection of *all* the saints. He says, "We acknowledge that some of the saints sometimes sinned; and that all, the best not excepted, are *liable* to sin." p. 199. The sinful imperfection of some saints is very fully acknowledged, in the book of Doctrines and Discipline, already referred to. As a proof of this take the following passages: "While so much of nature remains even in believers." p 116. "This consideration may satisfy those who inquire, Why so *few* have received the blessing?" that is, the blessing of entire sanctification. See p. 121. In the next page the author (Mr. Wesley) is speaking of those believers who are not yet perfect in love, when he says, "And yet we may be sensibly pained at the *sinful nature* that still remains in us." In the 136th page of the book referred to, the author is very explicit in opposing the idea of complete deliverance from sin, as being considered common to all believers. He says, "Deny that any ever came up to this, if you please: but do not say *all* who are justified, do." So far as our opponents concede that some of the saints are sinfully imperfect, they no doubt accord with the Bible, our common standard.—Here then is a point in which we are agreed, viz. That *some* of the saints are *sinfully imperfect*. But in *this* we disagree;—that while *we* say, they are *all* sinfully imperfect; *they* say, that some of them are sinlessly perfect. We demand proof of this. They answer, God has testified concerning Noah, Job, and others, that they were *perfect*. Now, if we, on our part, can prove that God has testified this about the whole company of believers, even about all the saints on earth, we shall do away the force of their argu-

ment, unless they should shift their ground, and say that sinless perfection is common to all saints. In Psal. xxxvii. 37, it is said, "Mark the *perfect* man, and behold the *upright*; for the end of that man is peace." Here it is manifest, that *perfect*, and *upright*, are used synonymously. Every upright man is a perfect man. And yet all the friends of the Redeemer are denominated upright. "The upright love thee." Sol. Song i. 4. I would turn the attention of my readers to Prov. ii. 20—22: "That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous. For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it." In this passage it is obvious, that *good men*, the *righteous*, the *upright*, and the *perfect*, are all only different names for the same sort of men; and also, that these men are contrasted with the *wicked*, and with transgressors: This implies, that all who are not perfect, are to be denominated wicked and transgressors. But there is a passage, 1 Cor. ii. 6, which more conclusively proves, that all who are born of God are, in scripture language, perfect. "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect." The apostle had in the preceding chapter shown, that Christ crucified was to the unbelieving Jews a stumbling block, and to the unbelieving Greeks foolishness, but unto them which were called both Jews and Greeks, Christ was the power of God and the wisdom of God. In the beginning of this chapter he tells them, he did not come to them with the excellency of speech, or *wisdom*, declaring unto them the testimony of God. In connexion with this declaration it is that he says, "Howbeit we speak *wisdom* among them that are perfect:" As much as to say, Tho' I do not come to preach the philosophy of the schools, nor to make a display of eloquence, still I would not be understood, that the doctrine which we preach is really foolish; it is wisdom, even the height of wisdom,—and so it will appear to real christians,—to them who are called, both Jews and Greeks. All these he evidently denominates *perfect*. In the 14th verse he says; "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." The natural man

is contrasted with them that are perfect; all therefore who are not natural, that is, unregenerate men, are in the language of the apostle *perfect*.

All the regenerate are also called *saints*, that is, holy ones. Mr. B. seeks to prove the sinless perfection of David by this, that he said, "I am *holy*." But this argument, if it be a good one, would prove the sinless perfection of all the christian family on earth; for all the christians who were at Rome, and Corinth, and other places, to whom the apostles directed epistles, are termed *saints*, or holy persons. *All* the converted are described as being *righteous*, *just*, *good*, &c. Now all the names, by which the children of God are distinguished from the children of the devil, are expressive of that part of their character, wherein they are made to *differ*. The inspired writers have not been led to invent any means, which shall, at one view, exhibit both parts of their character, the renewed and unrenewed nature. The colleges have invented a compound name for one of their classes, calling them *Sophomores*, i. e. (being literally translated into English) *wise fools*. It is no doubt designed to express this idea, that they are, in this period of their academic life, just emerging from ignorance to wisdom, still retaining much of the former. But the scriptures have not furnished us with any such compound terms, to distinguish such as have some holiness mixed with some sin; some wisdom with some folly. All the children of God are denominated *wise*. The wise, and the fools, in scripture language, comprehend all mankind; tho' some of the wise have much more heavenly wisdom than others, and none of them are wholly free from moral folly.

If it should be asked, What propriety is there in giving such characteristic names to christians, if they are sinfully imperfect; and why do not the scriptures give them a name descriptive of the other part of their character? We answer, 1. That *holiness* is the thing wherein they differ from their fellow men; therefore, *saints*, or some other name of the like import, is proper to *distinguish* them. 2. Holiness, without any mixture of sin, is the point of perfection to which their present character, according to the covenant of grace, continually tends, and to which it will at length arrive;

therefore they are even now called *saints*, *righteous*, and *perfect*. They may also be spoken of as perfect on account of their being complete in Christ their Head.

But it may be asked, Is not this calculated to mislead the reader of the Bible, if he there reads of some, that they are *holy*, *just*, *upright* and *perfect*, without any intimation of a draw-back upon this good character, when in reality it means no more, than that they have *some* holiness, justice and uprightness; and that they have perfection not in degree, but only in nature? To this it may be answered; Let the reader only compare spiritual things with spiritual, and he will not be misled. The saints are never called sinners, when contrasted with the unconverted; but they confess their sinful imperfection. Peter confesses, "I am a *sinful* man, O Lord." Christ represents the publican as praying, "God be merciful to me a *sinner*." His heart was right when he made this prayer, and yet he felt that he was a sinner. Agur, who is mentioned in the 30th chapter of Proverbs, was doubtless one of the wise, and yet he confesses, "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man." The reader of the Bible is often reminded, at the same moment that he reads of the good character of the children of light, that this good character is not brought to perfection in them. If they are represented as fruitful branches, still they need *purging*, that they may bring forth more fruit. John xv. 2. If they are spoken of as *just* men, still we are taught, that there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not.

The Methodists distinguish christians on earth by *the justified*, and *the sanctified*. They consider all as justified, but only a part as sanctified. By the sanctified, they mean those who are wholly freed from sin. These they call perfect. Now we can find no such distinction as this, between christians on earth. We read of one that feared God above many. Neh. vii. 2. David speaks of one who feared the Lord, and delighted *greatly* in his commandments. Psal. cxii. 1. Christ in the parable of the sower, divides the good ground into that which brought forth thirty fold, sixty fold, and an hundred fold. There are different attainments in knowledge and holi-

ness; but there is no intimation that this difference exists between christians; that some have sin dwelling in them, and that others have their warfare with indwelling sin, brought to a close. They are all pressing on to the mark of perfection; but they all confess that they have not yet attained to it. We have seen that the word *perfect*, is not used in scripture to point out any such class of christians, as are distinguished from their brethren by an entire sanctification. Therefore if the fact exists, other proof of it is to be sought.

II. Another argument, which is much depended on by those who believe in a perfect sanctification in this life, is derived from what is said about the cleansing effect of the blood of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit. The author of the Letters seeks to support his doctrine by such passages as 1 John i. 7—"And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from *all sin*;" and Titus ii. 14; "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from *all* iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Now, if these passages prove, that any are in this life cleansed from *all sin*, and redeemed from *all iniquity*, they will prove, that this is the case with all the justified. Those who are represented as being cleansed at all, are represented as cleansed from *all* sin; and those who are redeemed at all, are said to be redeemed from *all* iniquity. But this would be as contrary to *their* sentiments, as to *ours*. The truth is, the atonement was made for all sin, and for all sorts of sin—and they who are interested in the blood of atonement, and as it were sprinkled with it, have all their sin pardoned. They also have all their sins mortified, so that there is no Agag, no beloved sin, spared. A cleansing is begun which will eventually make thorough work. The whole redeemed church will be redeemed from all iniquity, and will be presented without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. There is no kind of impropriety in saying, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all sin*, because this cleansing does not become perfect at once. If it is perfected during the soul's stay in the body, so that when it leaves the body, it is in a state of sinless perfection, this is a *short work*; for the period

of its purifying, compared with the period of its sinless perfection in eternity, is but as a moment.*

III. It is an argument used by our antagonists to support their doctrine, That God *commands* men *to* be *perfect*. This argument is used in their book of Doctrines. We will acknowledge, that this argument proves that sinful imperfection is wrong, and, on our part, inexcusable; and that sinless perfection is our duty. But if because it is commanded, it be proof that it will exist, it must be proof in favor of the perfection not of a part only, but of all; for surely all are required to be perfect. Christ said to all his disciples, "Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." The command of the God of Israel to his people was to extirpate the nations of Canaan; To leave neither root nor branch. This was their duty. But the wisdom of God is represented as being concerned in their not wholly driving them out at once. A remnant of these nations was left to prove Israel, and to be the means of their learning war.† This is a striking *illustration*, if not a proof, of our doctrine. It was probably designed as a typical representation of it. The command is plain to the spiritual Israel, to destroy the spiritual Canaanites, and give them no quarter. But the wisdom of God sees fit to leave some of these spiritual Canaanites in the land, to prove Israel, and make them know what is in their heart. By their means they are taught the spiritual warfare. While they fight under the Captain of salvation, the Lord by little and little drives out these devoted nations, until at length they are entirely dispossessed.

In their book of Doctrines which is before me, I find this is considered by them, as an unanswerable argument in favor of their doctrine of perfection; That the scripture furnishes us with *prayers* in favor of it. To

*In the book of Doct. and Discip. the question is asked, "Is there any clear spiritual *promise* of this, That God will save us from *all sin*? Ans. There is. Psalm cxxx. 8. *He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*" We believe as fully as they can, that the Lord will redeem Israel from all his iniquities; and in consistency with this, we believe, that not a single Israelite will be perfectly redeemed from all iniquity until the end of life.

† See Deut. vii. 2. Jud. iii. 1. Psal. cvi. 34, 35.

this argument we briefly reply, 1. It is our duty to be perfectly holy now. It is our duty to desire it, in itself considered, and in its immediate consequences. These desires we may express to God in way of prayer. They are a relief to the soul burthened with the body of death, and they are pleasing in the sight of God. Jesus Christ prayed that the cup might pass from him, which nevertheless he must drink. But, 2. The prayers which are put up for the sinless perfection of the saints, will be heard. The Church has always been praying for the universal reign of Christ; but all past generations have died without the sight; Yet their prayers are not lost. All the holy petitions, which have been put up before the throne of grace for this glorious day, will help to hasten, and bring it forward in its time. So all the prayers, which christians put up for entire deliverance from sin, will be heard. God will hasten this work in its own time. And it will be but a little time, after any begin to pray against their inward foes, before they will all be slain, and never again break their peace.

IV. It is a very serious objection, which our antagonist brings against our doctrine, that it exceedingly favors the cause of wickedness. Perhaps there is not one of my Eight Sermons, on which his remarks are so severe in this respect, as the sermon on the *sinful imperfection of good men in this life*. Of all which he says on this subject, I need quote but a sentence or two, to convince the reader. "If," says Mr. B. "mankind are fond of a religion suited to their sinful nature, it is reasonable to suppose that they will seek one that permits them to foster the evils of their heart, such as pride, self-seeking, hardness of heart, unbelief, &c. If the reader wishes to see a description of such a system of religion, he may find it painted to the life in your sermon on *sinful imperfection*." Letters, p. 260. This is a heavy charge; but before we are condemned let us be heard.

We now demand, Wherein does our doctrine favor sin? Do we make void the law? Do we say, it is repealed or abated? Nay, we establish the law. Our opponents talk of an easier law than that given to Adam. They speak of that as being rigorous. Mr. B. page 183, says, "It ought furthermore to be observed, that no

man since the introduction of moral evil into our world, is under the Adamic law, (which was a law of works,) for justification and salvation. *Neither is it a rule of life* or of judgment." He pleads that christians are under the law of liberty. It is manifest that Mr. B's Letters, and the Methodist book of Doctrine, consider christians under a less strict law, than the law first given to man; for they concede, that if christians were still considered as under that law, they would be sinfully defective in their obedience. See Letters, p. 159. Doct. and Discip. p. 127. Suffer me to make some quotations from the page last referred to. "This" (i. e. Adamic law) "is in substance the same as the *Angelic* law, being common to angels and men. It required that man shou'd use to the glory of God all the powers with which he was created.——————And no man is obliged to perform it: God does not require it of any man. *For Christ is the end of the Adamic*, as well as the Mosaic law."

Now *we* believe, that the Adamic law, as explained in the quotation just made, obliging us *to use to the glory of God all the powers with which we were created*, is in *full force* as the *rule of life*; and just so far as we fall short of this, we view ourselves criminal, and without excuse. We know that those who are under grace, are not at the same time under the law, as a covenant of works; that is, they are not under the *penalty* of the law; but we view none as freed from obligation to obey the *precepts* of this original law of righteousness. Their obligation is perfect. This we believe, and this we preach. Does this look like favoring sin? We appeal to all the world to determine, which doctrine is more calculated to favor sin; the one which pleads for the unabated strictness of the law, and which places a *perfect rule* before imperfect creatures; or the one which presents an abated law before transgressors and imperfect creatures, and which intimates, that it would now be rigid, to require creatures in their circumstances to be as holy as angels in heaven, or as holy as Adam in Eden. Is not this an easy way to get sin out of the universe; to alter laws, and accommodate them to the character of creatures? If it be proper to alter them at all, why not alter them enough to bring them quite

down to our present character? This would surely get rid of the doctrine of *sinful imperfection*, not only from the church, but from the world

Mr. B. speaks of our doctrine as permitting christians *to foster* the evils of their heart, such as pride, &c. Is this a candid representation? Can he point to a place in my sermon on *the imperfection of saints in this life*, in which saints are encouraged to foster the evils of their heart? Do we make any excuse for the imperfection of believers? On the authority of the word of God, we state the *fact*; that believers are in this life imperfect, even sinfully imperfect. But as well might it be said, that we teach unregenerate sinners to foster the depravity of their hearts, because we tell them from the word of God, that they are depraved, even totally depraved.

It is well known that we believe God has *power* to produce a complete work of sanctification in the hearts of his people, while they live in this world; but that he has determined not to exert his power to effect this. It was thought therefore to be honorable to the divine character, to show that he might have wise designs to answer by such a constitution of things, as did not provide for the perfect sanctification of his people in this life. According to our doctrine, God has wise designs in having sin in the universe. We fully believe, that our unrighteousness will commend the righteousness of God; and still that God is not unrighteous who taketh vengeance; and that the truth of God will more abound through our lie unto his glory. See Rom. iii. 4—8. We believe that God has wise designs to answer, in never purging all sin out of the universe; and that he has wise reasons, for not purging it all away from his redeemed church while in its militant state. Some of these reasons were suggested in the Sermon; and they are reasons, which we still believe, will bear the light of scripture; and such as do not tarnish the glory of that Being, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil. Sin exists in the created system. This is a fact. If any think it most for the honor of God, to say, It exists because he could not prevent it—let them take that way to account for it: but it is not *our* way; neither do we think it is the way which the divine oracles take to account for it. Here is another fact; The people of

God are in this life sinfully imperfect. That some of them are so, our opponents concede. Why does not God make them all perfect in holiness, without delay? If any say, it is because he *cannot*; we do not take this way to account for it. To us it appears much more honorable to the character of the Almighty, and more conformable to scripture, to say; he has wise reasons for not making them perfect in holiness at once. Is it not evidently to be understood concerning the pride of Hezekiah, which he manifested when the princes of Babylon sent ambassadors to inquire about the wonder done in the land; that it was in wisdom, *God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart?* 2 Chron xxxii. 31. If this was consistent with the holiness of God, then there is nothing in the nature of things, to render it inconsistent, that he should leave all his children in a state of imperfection, as it respects their renovated character, until the whole of their probationary state shall be expired.

I think any one would suppose, from reading Mr. B's. strictures on the sermon under consideration, that the sermon had cautioned christians against having much holiness in this life.* But no such idea ought to

* This remark will very justly apply to what Mr. Fletcher has written on the subject of christian perfection, in what he stiles, *The Last Check to Antinomianism*. He begins his third Section in this manner: "I repeat it, if our *pious* opponents decry the doctrine of *Christian Perfection*, it is chiefly through misapprehension; it being as natural for pious men to recommend exalted piety, as for covetous persons to extol great riches." To this it may be replied that Mr. Fletcher misapprehends Mr. Hill, and his other opponents, if he thinks they *decry* sinless perfection, considered as a *duty*, and *the mark* towards which we are all to press. His opponents, with all their talents, recommend exalted piety: but they view the most exalted piety on earth, as falling far below the sinless perfection of the heavenly state. According to their understanding of the word of God, it is one symptom of the most exalted piety on earth, to lead the christian to cry out, *Not as tho' I had already attained, either were already perfect;——O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

To convince the reader, that I have not misrepresented the strain of Mr. Fletcher's Last Check, I will refer him to a sentence in Section V. "If," says Mr. F. "St. Peter, the first of Mr. Hill's witnesses, does not say a word to countenance Antinomianism, and to recommend Christian imperfection; let

be entertained. We inculcate sinless perfection, not only on saints, but also on sinners. Of this our author must have been convinced, by reading the 6th sermon in that volume, which drew forth his animadversions.

Do the members of our churches obtain the idea from their ministers, that it is matter of small consequence how they live? And are there none of those who believe in our doctrine, whose lives are exemplary, even equally exemplary with those, who not only hold the *doctrine* of sinless perfection, but who profess to have attained to that *state?* It will doubtless be acknowledged, that professors can be found of our sentiments, who are men of great integrity in their dealings, whose word can be relied upon, who are chargeable with no unchaste conduct, and who are temperate in their habits; whose conduct at home and abroad, is such as becometh the gospel; who are also apparently much engaged in the cause of religion, being often in their closets, and constant in their attention to family worship, and who bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; who keep holy the sabbath day, and seem greatly to delight in the habitation of the Lord's house and the place where his honor dwelleth. They pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and appear greatly to rejoice in the building up of Zion. No discourse is so pleasing to them as that which is of a religious nature, and they seem to prefer that religious discourse which pertains to the very vitals of true godliness. They appear most in their element, when their tongues and their hands are engaged in the things which relate to the kingdom of the Redeemer. They not only talk about religion, but they seem to have liberal souls, to devise liberal things. They give to the poor, and they continue to give. They cast not only mites; but some of them cast much into the Lord's treasury; and speak of it as a privilege, that they have opportunity to devote their carnal things, to advance

us see if St. James *pleads for Baal* in the *heart*, any more than *for Baal* in the *life* of perfect believers." What does this imply less than a charge against Mr. Hill and other Calvinists; that they *recommend* christian imperfection; and that they *plead for Baal* in the *heart* and *life* of believers?

the spiritual interests of their fellow men. Besides all this, they seem to have a deep acquaintance with experimental religion. They do not appear to be unacquainted with contrition for sin; nor with faith in the Redeemer. They speak of seasons when his glory appears very attractive to their souls. They talk of hidden joys in religion, of which they were once wholly ignorant. But in connexion with all this, they tell of a great warfare in their own breasts. They see not only *some*, but *very much* corruption in their hearts. The more they are enlarged with love to divine things, the greater discovery they seem to have of indwelling sin, of its evil nature, and deep rootedness in their hearts. They often have such an overwhelming sense, not only of their past follies, but of the remaining corruptions of their hearts, that they feel ashamed and confounded before a holy God. It is among us manifestly the case, that those who give evidence of the greatest degrees of sanctification, and devotedness to the cause of religion, appear to be the most affected, not only with past, but with *present depravity*.*

* I have thought it would not be uninteresting to the reader, in this connexion, to see a few extracts from the Lives of some eminent christians of the Calvinistic school; which may serve as a specimen of their experiences on the subject of sinful imperfection. The extracts which I propose to put into this Note, will be taken from such Lives as I have in my possession. The first will be taken from the Life of Mr. David Brainerd, who was a missionary among the Indians. The Life of Mr. Brainerd, as published by President Edwards, consists chiefly in extracts from his Diary, in which he noted down the daily exercises of his heart. If he actually had such exercises as he relates, it would seem, that no one could doubt of the genuiness of his religion; or forbear to acknowledge, that he *feared God above many*. And not only his heart, but also his *life*, appeared to be devoted to God. Mr. Brainerd was born 1718, and his new birth he dates from some time in the year 1739. Nearly three years after this, being April 1st, 1742, he thus writes: "I seem to be declining with respect to my life and warmth in divine things: Had not so free access to God in prayer as usual of late. O that God would humble me deeply in the dust before him. I deserve hell every day for not loving my Lord more, *who has* (I trust) *loved me and given himself for me*."

Lord's day, April 4th.—"In the evening God gave me faith in prayer, and made my soul melt in some measure, and gave

What shall we say to these things? Shall we say, that these professors are really as much more sinful than others, as they appear to themselves to be? But these same persons will tell you, that when they lived

me to taste a divine sweetness. O my blessed God! Let me climb up near to him, and love, and long, and plead, and wrestle, and reach, and stretch after him, and for *deliverance from the body of sin and death.*" Two days after, he writes;——"Was suddenly struck with a damp, from the sense I had of my own vileness. Then I cried to God to wash my soul and cleanse me from my exceeding filthiness, to give me repentance and pardon; and it began to be something sweet to pray." Lord's day, April 18th.—"At night, saw myself infinitely indebted to God, and had a view of my short comings: It seemed to me that I had done as it were nothing for God, and that I never had *lived to him* but a few hours of my life." Lord's day, Oct. 17th.—"This evening, in secret prayer, I felt exceeding solemn, and such longing desires of deliverance from sin, and after conformity to God, as melted my heart. O, I longed to be *delivered from this body of death!* I felt inward pleasing pain that I could not be conformed to God entirely, fully and forever." Thus, Nov. 4th.—"O it is sweet *lying in the dust!* but it is distressing, to feel in my soul that hell of corruption, which still remains in me."

Friday, April 8th, 1743,—"Was exceedingly pressed under a sense of my pride, selfishness, bitterness, and party spirit in times past, while I attempted to promote the cause of God.—Of late I have thought much of having the kingdom of Christ advanced in the world; but now I saw I had enough to do within myself. *The Lord be merciful to me a sinner,* and wash my soul." Friday, April 22d.—"Had a sense of barrenness. O, my leanness testifies against me! My very soul abhors itself for its unlikeness to God, its inactivity and sluggishness." Tuesday, May 10th,—"Was in the same state, as to my mind, that I have been in for some time, extremely pressed with a sense of guilt, pollution, blindness.——O! the pride, selfishness, hypocrisy, ignorance, bitterness, party zeal, and want of love, candor, meekness and gentleness that have attended my attempts to promote religion and virtue; and this when I have reason to hope I had real assistance from above, and some sweet intercourse with heaven! But alas, what corrupt mixtures attend my best duties!" July 2d.—"Sometimes my soul has been in distress on feeling some particular corruptions rise and swell like a mighty torrent, with present violence; having at the same time ten thousand former sins and follies presented to view, in all their blackness and aggravations.

Lord's day, Jan. 1st. 1744.—"Saw myself so vile and unworthy, that I could not look my people in the face, when I came to preach. O my meanness, folly, ignorance, and inward

in sin, without any inward knowledge of religion, they had not this conviction of their depravity; and that since they have entertained a hope, they have not at all times had this striking conviction of indwelling sin;

pollution!" Friday, Jan. 6th.—"Feeling and considering my extreme weakness, and want of grace, the pollution of my soul and danger of temptations on every side, I set apart this day for fasting and prayer, neither eating nor drinking from evening to evening, beseeching God to have mercy on me." Thursday, Dec. 6th.—"Moreover, considering my extreme barrenness, spiritual deadness, and dejection, of late; as also the power of some particular corruptions; I set apart this day for secret prayer and fasting, to implore the blessing of God on myself, on my poor people, on my friends, and on the church of God."

Wednesday, Jan. 1st. 1746.——"But alas, alas! tho' I have done the labors, and endured the trials, with what spirit have I done the one, and borne the other? How cold has been the frame of my heart oftentimes! And how little have I sensibly eyed the glory of God, in all my doings and sufferings!"—— Tuesday, April 15th. "My soul longed for more spirituality; and it was my burden that I could do no more for God. O, my barrenness is my daily affliction and heavy load. O, how precious is time; and how it pains me to see it slide away, while I do so little to any good purpose! O that God would make me more fruitful and spiritual."

Lord's day, April 5th, 1747.—"It grieved me to find myself so inconceivably barren. My soul thirsted for grace: But alas, how far was I from obtaining what I saw to be so exceeding excellent! I was ready to despair of ever being a holy creature; and yet my soul was desirous of *following hard after God*; but never did I see myself so far from having apprehended, or being already perfect, as at this time. The Lord's supper being this day administered, I attended the ordinance: And tho' I saw in myself a dreadful emptiness, and want of grace, and saw myself as it were at an infinite distance from that purity, which is becoming the gospel; yet in the season of communion, especially in the time of the distribution of the bread, I enjoyed some warmth of affection, and felt a tender *love to the brethren*, and, I think, to the glorious Redeemer, the first-born among them." Thursday, April 16th.—"Was in bitter anguish of soul, in the morning, such as I have scarce ever felt, with a sense of sin and guilt." Lord's day, May 17th,—"At this time God gave me some affecting sense of my own vileness, and the exceeding sinfulness of my heart; that there seemed to be nothing but sin and corruption in me. Innumerable evils compassed me about; my want of spirituality and holy living, my neglect of God, and living to myself; all the abominations

and they will say, that when they have had the least conviction of this, it has been when all their religious feelings were the most blunted.

This difference most obviously exists between *us*,

of my heart and life seemed to open to my view ?. and I had nothing to say, but *God be mereiful to me a sinner.*"

This last extract from Mr. Brainerd's Diary brings us down to a date less than five months previous to his death. During this time, through extreme bodily weakness, he wrote but little in his Diary. From this part I shall make one more extract, which was written probably nearly as late as July 19th. It seems to be his own review of his past experiences: "And although I could discover much corruption attending my best duties, many selfish views and carnal ends, much spiritual-pride and self exaltation, and innumerable other evils which compassed me about; I say, although I now discerned the sins of my holy things, as well as other actions, yet God was pleased, as I was reviewing, quickly to put this question out of doubt, by showing me, that I had, from time to time, acted above the utmost influence of mere self love; that I had longed to please and glorify him as my highest happiness," &c. These extracts have exhibited but one part of the experiences of Mr. Brainerd. The whole of his Life is strongly recommended to the reader's perusal.

Let us now just look at the Life of President Edwards. It appears that while he was pastor of the church at Northampton, he wrote a summary of his religious experiences from his youth up. From this summary I shall make an extract, which will serve to give us his views of indwelling sin, especially in his own heart. He thus writes: "I have often, since I have lived in this town, had very affecting views of my own sinfulness and vileness, very frequently so as to hold me in a kind of loud weeping, sometimes for a considerable time together, so that I have often been forced to shut myself up. I have had a vastly greater sense of my own wickedness, and the badness of my heart since my conversion than ever I had before. It has often appeared to me, that if God should mark iniquity against me, I should appear the very worst of all mankind; of all that have been since the beginning of the world to this time, and that I should have by far the lowest place in hell. When others, that have come to talk with me about their soul-concerns, have expressed the sense they have had of their own wickedness, by saying that it seemed to them that they were as bad as the devil himself, I thought their expressions seemed exceeding faint and feeble to represent my wickedness. I thought I should wonder that they should content themselves with such expressions as these, if I had any reason to imagine that their sin bore any proportion to mine. It

and those who are our *antagonists* in this controversy: Our *best* christians are the most convinced of their sinful imperfection; but *theirs* feel the most above it.—They even think, that no such imperfection cleaves to

seemed to me, I should wonder at myself, if I should express my wickedness in such feeble terms as they did.

"My wickedness, as I am in myself, has long appeared to me perfectly ineffable, and infinitely swallowing up all thought and imagination, like an infinite deluge, or infinite mountains over my head. I know not how to express better what my sins appear to me to be, than by heaping infinite upon infinite, and multiplying infinite by infinite. I go about very often, for these many years, with these expressions in my mind and in my mouth, "Infinite upon infinite——Infinite upon infinite!" When I look into my heart and take a view of my wickedness, it looks like an abyss infinitely deeper than hell. And it appears to me, that were it not for free grace, exalted and raised up to the infinite height of all the fulness and glory of the great Jehovah, and the arm of his power, and grace stretched forth in all the majesty of his power, and in all the glory of his sovereignty, I should appear sunk down in my sins infinitely below hell itself, far beyond the sight of every thing, but the piercing eye of God's grace, that can pierce even down to such a depth, and to the bottom of such an abyss.

"And yet I am not the least inclined to think, that I have a greater conviction of sin than ordinary. It seems to me, my conviction of sin is exceeding small and faint. It appears to me enough to amaze me, that I have no more sense of my sin. I know certainly, that I have very little sense of my sinfulness. That my sins appear to me so great, does not seem to me to be, because I have so much more conviction of sin than other christians, but because I am so much worse, and have so much more wickedness to be convinced of. When I have had these turns of weeping and crying for my sins, I thought I knew in the time of it, that my repentance was nothing to my sin.—It is affecting to me to think now ignorant I was, when I was a young christian, of the bottomless, infinite depths of wickedness, pride, hypocrisy, and deceit, left in my heart.

"I have vastly a greater sense of my universal, exceeding dependence on God's grace and strength, and mere good pleasure of late, than I used formerly to have, and have experienced more of an abhorrence of my own righteousness.——And yet I am greatly afflicted with a proud and self-righteous spirit, much more sensibly than I used to be formerly. I see that serpent rising and putting forth its head continually, every where, all around me."

In connexion with this extract from the Life of Mr. Edwards, I would introduce a short one from that sketch of the Life of his daughter Mrs. Burr, which is added to the Life of

them. Now I think it cannot be, that the same religion, the self same work of the Spirit, should produce such directly contrary effects in different hearts. And I would now ask; which of two men, who appear equal-

her father. In a letter to her father, in which she speaks of very peculiar support under trials, and sweet enjoyment of God, she has this sentence: "But O, Sir, what cause of deep humiliation and abasement of soul have I, on account of remaining corruption; which I see working continually, especially pride! O, how many shapes does pride cloke itself in,"

Mrs. Sarah Osborn, who died at Newport, R. I. in 1796, and whose Memoirs were published by her pastor, Dr. S. Hopkins, is considered among us as a christian of great eminence. It would appear by her experimental feelings and devotions which are breathed out in those of her private writings which are published; and also from the testimony of her minister, and of many living witnesses;—it would appear, that she was a woman who made a *business* of religion; who lived with God day by day, and enjoyed something of heaven upon earth. I might, by copious extracts from her Diary make it appear, that with all her uncommon piety, she still considered herself as *sinfully imperfect*. But I shall make only two or three extracts from her Diary; and as these shall be from the last part of it, they will serve to convince the reader that Mrs. Osborn did not ever think herself *perfect*, in the sinless sense of the word. Page 304, she says, "May I ever, with the publican, see my own vileness, smite upon my breast and cry, God be merciful to me a sinner! Surely it becomes me, so sinful a creature as I am, to approach a holy God (although with faith and without terror) yet with contrition and penitent shame and confusion of face." Again, page 316: "O that God will convince all his dear children, what is right, and what is wrong; and rectify all that is contrary to thy will in them. O root out the monster sin ——Lord, root it out, for Christ's sake, of my heart, as well as theirs. O could any one see the secret iniquity, the secret covetousness, after all my watchings and strivings against it, which thou God knowest, how would they be stumbled, and puzzled to reconcile this with all my renunciations of the world, and all that is dear in life.——Thou knowest my secret groanings under the oppression of the enemy, which none but thou canst fully know."

Take, as another specimen of her groanings under the body of death, what is found, page 318.* "But, my hasty soul, art

* I have, in these references to the page, had before me the second edition of Mrs. O's. Memoirs, published at Catskill, by Nathan Elliot, Bookseller; where this book can be obtained by those who wish to become more intimately acquainted with the interesting Life of this *mother in Israel*.

ly exact in their external deportment, is more likely to be right; the man who with all his exactness, and with all his inward comforts in religion, discovers innumerable evils in his heart, and also in his conduct; or the man who thinks he is so perfect, that there is nothing amiss in his life, no, nor even in his heart?

We repeat it, This difference exists between us;—and now we ask, How it shall be accounted for? Is it

thou ready? Thou polluted, thou imperfect one, Dost thou know what a holy, sin-hating God he is, into whose presence thou wouldest hasten? Whence this confidence of seeing his face with joy? Art thou ready?——Alas! all my works are imperfect, and unfinished; and will remain so if I should live to the age of Methuselah: Yea, and I shall add sin to sin, against my gracious God, till death does stop me. Not till then will my sanctification be complete."

The Life of Susanna Anthony, Mrs. Osborn's most intimate christian friend, is not now in my possession. But her experiences on the subject of *imperfection*, can be easily learned from what we find in the Memoirs of Mrs. Osborn. Mrs. O. thus writes in her Diary for Sept. 12, 1746. "Last evening I went to visit my dear Susa, who is sick, and rejoices in hope of being sick unto death. She tells me, that every approach of death is welcome.——O, I long," said she, "for one christian friend, to unite with me in pleading with God, to take me to himself, that I may *be freed from the body of sin and death.*"

And was not this experience, I would ask, conformable to that of the apostle? Did he not groan under the body of death? Did he not desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better, than to remain in this sinning world? Were not these experiences of Brainerd, and Edwards; of Mrs. Burr, Mrs. Osborn, and Miss Anthony, in harmony with the experiences of Job; who when the Lord drew near to him, cried out, "Behold I am vile—I abhor myself!" and with the experiences of the evangelical prophet; who, when he beheld the glory of the Lord, said, *Woe is me, I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips?* And do not the experiences which have been introduced, accord with those of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, who at one time says, *Iniquities prevail against me*, (Psal. lxv. 3;) and at another time, *They are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me*, (Psal. xl. 12;) and again, *For mine iniquities are gone over my head: as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of all my foolishness*, (Psal. xxxviii. 4, 5;) and again where he prays, *Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great?* Psal. xxv. 11. And did not Daniel, immaculate as he appeared, confess *his own sin*, as well as the sin of his people, before the God of Israel? Dan. ix. 20.

because there are *no christians* among *us?* or is it because there are *no christians* among *them?*. Neither of these can I believe. I pray to be kept from bigotted uncharitableness, and also from that false catholicism, which cries peace unto them, to whom the Lord hath not spoken peace. The first, and as I conceived, a legitimate inference from the doctrine maintained in the Sermon, was this: "If good men are never free from sinful imperfection in this life, it may be inferred, that *they* are deceived about themselves, who think they live without sin." The following sentence was contained in that inference. "We cannot; we believe, we ought not, to entertain the least mite of charity for the religion of that man (however apparently pious he is) who shall say, that for years, or months, or weeks, or days, he has lived in such a holy manner, that he discovers nothing in his conduct, in his words, or the frame of his heart, of which he feels that he ought to repent." By this it was not meant to be understood, that no charity could be entertained for a Methodist, or for one who believes that sinless perfection is attainable in this life; but that none could be entertained for the man who should say, 'This perfection exists in *me*' We thought our text authorized us to draw such an inference; and that the passage from Job, as also that from John's first epistle, were direct supporters of our inference. Job says, "If I *say* I *am perfect*, it shall *prove* me perverse," John says, "If we say, We have *no sin*, we *deceive* ourselves, and *the truth is not in us.*" Suffer me here to introduce the comment of Mr. Scott on this last passage: "While the apostle strenuously insisted on the necessity of an habitual holy walk, as the effect and evidence of the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus, and of communion with him; he guarded, with equal care, against the opposite error of self-righteous pride. If any professed christians, while they seemed to walk in the light, should be so elated with a conceit of their own attainments, as to say, "that they had no sin," but were perfectly pure, and as holy in heart and life as the law required, *they were certainly deceived in a most awful manner*; nay, *the truth was not in them, as a principle of life and illumination*; or they never could have fallen into a mistake which implied the most

gross ignorance of God, of his spiritual law, and of their own hearts."

If the sinful imperfection of all good men, is a true doctrine, it must be a doctrine the truth of which is *experimentally* known by all good men; for this sinful imperfection exists in their own hearts. Where any doctrine is not directly tested by experience, it is easier to conceive of real christians making a mistake. It is therefore more easy to believe, that a christian does not adopt the doctrine of divine decrees, than that he does not adopt into his creed the total depravity of the unrenewed heart. It is not as difficult to entertain a hope concerning him, who denies the certain perseverance of all saints, as about him, who holds to a sinless perfection as exemplified in his own case.

If I know my heart, I do not say these things to render reviling for reviling. My antagonist must stand or fall to his own Master. I would not say these things, lest I should seem to reproach those of the contrary part, if I did not feel myself obliged in duty to say them. But now, since I have begun to examine their doctrine, in its bearing upon the genuineness of their experimental religion, I must be suffered to speak plainly. I hope I shall not forget, that "there is not a word in my tongue," nor a sentence which drops from my pen, "but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether."

Would not these professing brethren do well to inquire, whether their Christian perfection, by which they differ from other denominations of Protestants, is not owing to one or all the following reasons?

1. Their having in effect abated the divine law. They lay claim to perfection which wholly keeps the moral law; and yet they acknowledge that they do not come up to the requirements of the law as it was when given to Adam. And as it was given to him, they explain it as requiring no more than this, "that man should use to the glory of God all the powers with which he was created."

2. If they have not been misunderstood by us, they do not hold to the criminality of *evil thoughts*, in the same sense that others do. They often converse in such a manner as to imply this, that if they check their evil thoughts, instead of acting them out then there is no sin.

It is true, that a fiery dart of the devil, if it be immediately repelled by us, is not our sin : but if by evil thoughts are meant evil desires in our own minds, they defile us, and render us criminal as soon as they exist. "The *thought* of foolishness is sin." Prov. xxiv. 9. "As a man *thinketh* in his heart, so is he." Prov. xxiii. 7. The thoughts, when by them the exercises of the heart are meant, do the whole towards constituting our character before the searcher of hearts. Our *external* conduct is wicked, only as it is the fruit of a wicked heart. We read, Gen. vi. 5, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Here total depravity is described, by representing all the *thoughts* as evil, and only evil. Just so far then as the thoughts are evil in christians, so far they still remain depraved.

3. Do not our opponents approve of those religious experiences, which are really bottomed on *selfishness*; and is not this one reason why they think they are pure from sin? Mr. B. opposes disinterested benevolence. In their book of Doctrines, it is said, "There is a necessity of knowing his love, who first loved us, without which we cannot love him again." p. 78. It is clear from the scriptures, that men can be full of religion from selfish motives; and if they do not distinguish between selfish and disinterested motives, they will be in danger of thinking that they are perfect, when they have no love to God, except as they view him to *be their friend*. This was the case with the sect of the Pharasees among the Jews; they trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. But God who knew their hearts, saw nothing holy in them.

4. Is it not to be feared, that it is because the spirit of God does not dwell in them, that they are not made sensible of indwelling sin? It is one part of the office work of the Holy Spirit to convince of sin. John xvi. 8. Before Paul was spiritually enlightened, he was in his own view alive; but when he was shown the plague of his own heart, it appears that he was never again ignorant of the hidden evils of it. Under these he groaned as under a body of death. Some professors there are in our connexion, who like Paul, have had two dif-

ferent hopes; they had one before what they now consider their conversion to God, and the other they have had since that time. These persons appear quite different, since they experienced what they now call their conversion, from what they did before that time. They seem now to love religion a great deal better than they appeared to love it before. And yet, with the greatest seriousness, they tell us, that they have now a much greater sense of their sinfulness than they formerly had. They declare, that they have a new sense of the holiness of God and of his law, and of Christ;—and that they have a sweet love to this holiness, which before they knew nothing about, while they trusted in that hope of which they are now ashamed. And they also declare, that in connexion with these delightful views of divine holiness, they have increasing views of the unfathomable depths of depravity in their own hearts.

We can add with truth, that these conversions, as to their external fruits, appear better than their old ones, and their inward experiences appear to us to be conformable to the word of God. How can we then help entertaining great fears about the genuineness of their conversions, which so much resemble, what we call among ourselves, false hopes and false conversions? and whose religion so much resembles the religion of Paul, when he was alive without the grace of God; and when he lived in all good conscience, without a spark of holiness? With our views of religion, how can we help but tremble for them, lest, with all their pretensions to perfection, they should at last be found entirely wanting? If they are indeed perfect, we would rejoice in it: But if it be wholly owing to a misconception of divine truth, and a want of knowledge of their own hearts, that they think themselves perfect, our heart's desire and prayer to God for them is, that they may be saved from this delusion.

SECTION V.

A VINDICATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE CERTAINTY OF THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS; BEING A REPLY TO THE OBJECTIONS AGAINST THIS DOCTRINE, WHICH ARE CONTAINED IN MR. BANGS' FIFTH LETTER.

MR. BANGS suggests an idea in his Fifth Letter, which seems calculated to preclude our saying any thing more in vindication of our doctrine. I have therefore thought it would be proper to look at this idea, before I proceed to the proposed vindication. The idea, to which I refer, will be found in the following quotation: "I would ask, is it not possible to be mistaken in your sentiment on this subject? If you say no, then you set up for *infallibility*; a claim which the protestant world will not, it is presumed, allow you.—If you say it is *possible* to be mistaken, you give up the point, and grant the *possibility* of totally falling from grace. If you say it is not possible, because the scriptures are in your favor, you thereby assume nearly as high ground as the *Pope* still; because the reply supposes you cannot mistake the meaning of scripture. By granting the bare *possibility* of mistaking the design of those scriptures you have quoted, to support your doctrine, you grant all I contend for, and acknowledge that it is possible for a saint so to fall as to perish forever. This argument cannot be retorted upon us, for we allow the possibility of a believer's persevering steadfast to the end: and also that there is no *necessity* for any one to apostatize from the faith" p. 240, 241.

I do not see why the argument cannot be retorted upon them. Here is a point of doctrine in dispute between us, namely, Whether, according to the structure of the covenant of grace, it be possible that any heaven born soul should be lost? They affirm it is possible; we deny. Now, it is certain, that we differ no more from them on this point, than they do from us. And we have as good a right to say to them, May you not be mistaken? as they to say so to us. If, to prove they are not mistaken, they proceed to show that the scripture is in their favor, we should have equal right to tell them, that by this they "assumed nearly as high ground as the *Pope*." Advancing a sentence or two beyond the above quotation, Mr. B. says; "Now any thing is possible which does not involve a *contradiction*; which no man, I think, will contend that the doctrine contended for does." He intends the doctrine of a possibility of falling from a state of grace. The universalist, in contending with my antagonist, might raise just such an argument;—he might say, "Mr. B. are you certain you are right in opposing the doctrine of the salvation of all men? Now any thing is possible which does not involve a *contradiction*; which no man I think will contend, that the doctrine of a universal salvation does; for if God can save one, he can save all." If Mr B. should say, "I am certain that I am right in opposing you, not because there is any impossibility in itself considered, that all men should be saved; but the scriptures are most pointedly against your doctrine, and therefore I know you are wrong," might not the universalist reply, "You thereby assume nearly as high ground as the *Pope* still?"

The dispute between me and my antagonist, is not whether it is, in itself considered, possible that holiness should be lost out of the heart of any created intelligent; but whether it is possible it should be lost out of the hearts of the *saints*, in consistency with the *gracious covenant* in which they are interested. The fifth question in the Debate was, (I believe,) in these words; *Will any one who is united to Christ, by a vital union, so fall away as to perish?* Both sides of this question cannot be true, therefore the Bible can say nothing only on one side of it. The Bible has, no doubt, reflected suf-

ficient light on this question, to put it beyond all uncertainty. We do not ask any to believe as we do, merely because *we* believe so. This would do them no good. But as we *believe*, so we must *speak*. Our opponents have the same liberty. Still to God we are under perfect obligation to speak nothing contrary to what he has spoken.

The text which laid the foundation for the 5th Sermon, was John vi. 47. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.* It was supposed, that the truth contained in the text amounted to this; *That the true believer in Christ cannot fall away so as to fail of eternal blessedness:* or in other words, *That every true believer will persevere unto the end.*

The two pillars, which were considered as sufficient to support the doctrine of the certain perseverance of all true saints, are the *covenant of redemption*, and the *covenant of grace*. By the covenant of redemption, we understand that covenant concerning the redemption of sinners, which eternally existed between the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, those three who bear record in heaven, who are one. Mr. B. thinks the scriptures do not favor the idea of the existence of any such covenant. One reason, which he seems to suggest against the existence of such a covenant, is this, That the Persons of the Godhead are essentially *one*. But they are not *one* in such a sense, as to exclude their being also in a sense *three*; else why does Mr. B. himself speak of three Persons in the Godhead? Their unity does not prevent their *promising*, and *performing* to each other. Thus in the second Psalm, the Father says to his Son, "Ask of me, and *I* shall give the heathen for *thine* inheritance." So in the 110th Psalm, "The Lord, (i. e. Jehovah the Father,) "said unto my Lord," (i. e. the Lord Christ,) "Sit thou" &c.—Again in the same Psalm; "The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever." In the 49th chapter of Isaiah, the Father says to the Son, "*I* will give *thee* for a covenant unto the people." In the 17th chapter of John, the Son says to the Father, "*I* have glorified *thee* on the earth: I have finished the work which *thou* gavest *me* to do." This implies, that there was a certain work assigned him, and which he engaged

to perform, and that he had fulfilled his engagement by performing the work. He then makes application for the reward promised; "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self." Christ promised to send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, when he should go to the Father. He says, "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." John xvi. 14. It appears from these passages, and from others which might be introduced, that each person in the Godhead has a part to act in the work of saving sinners, and that there is a perfect concert in their work. It would not even be necessary that we should be able to find the word *covenant*, used in application to this holy concert between the Persons of the Trinity; if we find *the thing*, it is all which concerns us.

That there is a *concert*, exhibited to us under the form of a mutual stipulation between the Persons of the Trinity, about the salvation of sinners, will appear with clearness, by examining the scriptures. The passage already quoted from the 2nd Psalm, implies a covenant, where the Father, who is represented as just having exalted his Son to sit on the holy hill of Zion, says, "Ask —and I will give thee the heathen." It is implied, that there was a grant of the Gentiles previously made to the Redeemer, upon his resurrection and ascension; and that now, upon his making intercession for them, they were to be given him for his possession.

In the 89th Psalm, where the Lord is said to make a covenant with his chosen, and to swear unto David his servant, there can be no reasonable doubt but that more is intended, than the real covenant with the literal David. This man after God's own heart, was in almost every thing typical of Christ. From references to the book of Psalms, which we find made in the New Testament, we are led to the conclusion, that Christ is the great Personage, to which much of that inspired book ultimately relates. If there are many things written in the Psalms concerning Christ, it would be exceedingly unnatural to suppose that no reference is had to him and his church in this 89th Psalm. What does this language import? "For I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant with my chosen, I

have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations." No doubt, primary reference is had to the covenant of royalty with David, in which there was a promise, that his seed should sit upon his throne after him: But the *mercy* of which the Psalmist speaks, which *shall be built up forever*, most naturally leads us to the kingdom of grace, which is an everlasting kingdom. How naturally are we led to the great Antitype, by what we find in the 19th and 20th verses: *Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help on one that is mighty: I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him.* How much more applicable to the Antitype than to the type, are these words; *Also I will make him my first born, higher than the kings of the earth.* And can any one doubt of the applicableness of the following verses to the mystical David, and his spiritual seed? *My mercy will I keep for him forevermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving kindness I will not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing which is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before me.* If this scripture will bear to be applied to the kingdom of the *Son* and *Lord of David*, the only kingdom which will be *established forever*, and *endure as the sun*; then these lessons of instruction are clearly taught in it: 1. That there is a stable covenant between Jehovah, the Father, and Jehovah Jesus, the Son, which they are bound by their holiness to fulfil to each other. 2. This covenant between the Father and the Son, has respect to the spiritual seed of Christ, for he has no other than a spiritual seed. Separately from the covenant made with the seed themselves, there is evidently a covenant made with Christ, as the Head of this holy seed. 3. It

is implied, that if his seed were any of them to be utterly rejected and disinherited on account of their misconduct, the Father would take his loving kindness from his Son, and suffer his faithfulness to *him* to fail. It is implied, that this would be breaking covenant, and altering the thing which had gone out of his lips; and that it would be even *lying* unto David. What follows in this Psalm is not meant as a denial of the existence of such a covenant; but the church, being now in a low state, under the scourges of the rod, expostulate with the God of truth, in view of this covenant, that he would not utterly forsake them.

We think we can discover the existence of such a covenant, as that which we have called the covenant of redemption, in the 110th Psalm. *The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.* From the application, which is repeatedly made of this verse in the New Testament, we learn, that in the beginning of the verse, "the Lord," means Jehovah the Father, and "my Lord," means the Son of God; and that his being invited to sit at the right hand of the Father, refers to the time of his ascension into heaven *The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.* Upon the ascension of Christ, the Spirit was sent down, and the apostles and ministers of the gospel, armed with the sword of the Spirit, the rod of divine power, with which to make conquests to the King of Zion, went forth from Jerusalem. This made way for the setting up of the kingdom of Christ in heathen lands, and for his ruling in the midst of his enemies. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning; thou hast the dew of thy youth.* "Thy people," must mean the people of king Messiah, now exalted to the right hand of the majesty on high. In the preceding verse we see the rod of his strength going out of Zion, and here we see the effect produced by it when accompanied with his *power*, that is, with the powerful influences of the Holy Ghost. It is a sweet description of the gospel, preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. His people, of whom is is said, that they shall be willing in the day of his power, are not the people sent out to make

the conquests, but those who shall, by their means, become subject to the King of Zion. They are called *his* people, before they become obedient to him, because the Father had given them to him, to be to him for a people. In the 10th chapter of John, the Saviour says; "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also must I bring" As these are called *his sheep*, because they were to become such; so here, they are called *his people*, which are given him to be his people.

Mr. B. says, "From the context it is manifest the Psalmist was speaking of the *willingness* of God's people to execute his commands in the day of his powerful vengeance." p. 216. But why then is it said, that this people shall be willing *in the beauties of holiness?* This looks like his converting sinners by exhibiting divine truth, and displaying before them the beauties of holiness, while the power of the Spirit should be present to remove the blindness of their heart; rather than the calling forth of an army with carnal weapons to execute vengeance.

The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. The Father hath sworn, or covenanted with the Son, that he shall forever be a reigning priest; that is, that by his priesthood, his sacrifice of himself, and his continual intercession, he should have a kingdom of redeemed subjects. In this Psalm then, we have the *triune* Jehovah introduced. The Psalm opens by showing us the Redeemer, the second Person of the Godhead, having just finished his work of suffering, and now welcomed by his divine Father to his right hand, with a promise that his gospel shall prove successful particularly among the Gentiles, it being accompanied by the power of the Holy Ghost. It implied that the Holy Ghost, the third Person in the Godhead, stood ready to fulfil his part of the work of redemption. The certainty of the success of the gospel, and the perpetuity of the mediatorial kingdom is then established, by this representation; that the whole matter had been confirmed by the *oath* of the immutable God. "The Lord hath *sworn*, and will not repent."

It was supposed in the Sermon on Perseverance, that

the 53d chapter of Isaiah reflected light on the covenant of redemption. Mr. B. says, "This text, which relates altogether to the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ; and the glorious consequences thereof, you quoted to prove that there was a covenant between the triune God in eternity! Is not this manifestly wresting scripture?" p. 217. I know that this passage of scripture relates to the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, and the glorious consequences thereof; and yet I cannot see that I have wrested it. Is it not evident, that these glorious consequences of the sufferings and death of Christ, are promised to him by another person, as a reward for his voluntary sufferings? This is made very evident by the last verse in the chapter, which was not quoted in the sermon. *Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death.* The portion which is to be divided him, is the same which is mentioned in the preceding verses, namely, his seeing the travail of his soul to his satisfaction, in a holy seed to serve him. It is evident from this important portion of scripture, that the divine Mediator stood ready, in the fulness of time, when a body should be prepared for him, to make himself an offering for sin; and that the Father stood engaged, that this sacrifice should not be offered up in vain; but that it should issue in a glorious number of spiritual sons and daughters. We cannot read this chapter attentively, and understandingly, without seeming to hear the Father address his Son in language like this: "My Son, be assured that thou shalt not die in vain. The doctrine of the cross shall be successful. Thou shalt have a redeemed progeny—Thy benevolent heart shall be fully satisfied." If there were an engagement only for their conversion, but not for their *perseverance* in holiness, still there would be no assurance given by the covenant, that any should finally be saved. The same truths are contained in the three last verses of the preceding chapter, as the reader will see, if he will take the pains to turn to them.

The covenant of which we are now treating, presents itself to our view, as we read the following passage out of the 6th chapter of John; "But I said unto you, that

ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me; that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." In this passage, these several things are either expressed, or evidently implied: 1. That there is a perfect agreement between the Father and the Son in the work of saving sinners. 2. That this agreement was made and established, previously to Christ's coming down from heaven. When he says, he came down from heaven not to do his own will, but the will of the Father which sent him; he is not to be understood, that he did not most cheerfully consent to this, so as to make it his own will or choice. He designs to teach us, that he had no object to answer by coming into the world, different from that which was the object of the whole Trinity. 3. In this passage we learn, That the Father has given some sinners to Christ, in distinction from their fellow men. It is not here explicitly said, that they are given as a reward of his sufferings; but by comparing this with the passage in Isaiah, which we have been considering, it is evident, that these which are said to be given, are the same as the seed which he was to see, and the travail of his soul, and the portion which the Father promised to divide to him, because he poured out his soul unto death.—Mr. B. says, "All were given to Christ." p. 115. We grant, that Christ by dying set open the door of mercy before all mankind; but the Father did not promise that he should actually have all mankind for a spiritual seed. It is evident, that when Christ first speaks of all which were given him of the Father, he contrasts them with some who did not, and who, he knew, would not believe. 4. It appears from this passage, that the concert between the Father and the Son, made it certain that these, who were given to Christ, should come to him. It appears they are given before they come, and

that their coming is the consequence of their being given. The verb *giveth* being in the present tense, does not alter the sense. If the Father should say to the Son, All the sinners which I give thee, shall come to thee: or all the sinners which I *have given* thee, shall come to thee; both expressions would amount to the same thing,—they would imply that they were given before they came, and in order to their coming. But that which is in the present tense in the 37th verse, is put into the past tense in the 39th verse; and so it is in the 17th chap. v. 2. Coming to Christ, in this place, must mean becoming interested in him by a living faith. 5. It is evidently contained in this passage, that the concert or covenant between the Father and the Son, makes it necessary that all those who come to Christ; that all who become christians, should be kept from falling, and be eternally saved. The Saviour seemed to feel perfectly certain, that all whom the Father had given him, should come to him. His dependence was upon his Father's faithfulness, and not upon the goodness of these sinners. He made declaration of his own faithfulness when he said, "And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Moreover he declares it to be his Father's will, that of all which he had given him he should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. Christ could not mean, that of all the human race he was to lose nothing, for it is manifest that many will be lost. I am not now seeking to prove election, tho' it is intimately interwoven with our present subject. But letting the doctrine of election pass for the present, can the passage before us prove any thing less, than the certain salvation of all who *come* to Christ?

The promise which Christ made to his disciples, that he would send the Holy Spirit to abide in them, and also to reprove the world of sin and righteousness and judgment, was founded upon the covenant of redemption, in which each Person in the Godhead has his distinct office and work, yet all are mutually engaged to effect the salvation of those which were given to Christ to be his redeemed church. The prayer of Christ to his Father, contained in the 17th chapter of John, appears to be founded on the covenant which was between

them, concerning the salvation of sinners. In that prayer Christ speaks of losing one which was given him; but it is evident, that by *being given him*, in this instance, he meant no more than being given him as one of his apostles, and as a member of his own family while he was here on earth. To say, that he was given to Christ in any higher, or more appropriate sense, would be to make Christ unfaithful in what he declared he had undertaken to do. See John vi. 37—40.

The name of this covenant we will not now stand to contend about; but the existence of a covenant between the Persons of the Godhead, concerning the salvation of those who are saved, I think is very evident. We have spent the more time to prove the existence of such a covenant, because we view it as a truth which holds an important place in the scheme of man's redemption. This covenant must be considered as made in eternity. As God is an eternal Being, who has no variableness nor shadow of turning, whatever he does in time, he must have always purposed to do. The apostle, writing to Timothy, teaches us, that those who were then called with a holy calling, were called according to the purpose and grace which were given them in Christ Jesus before the world began. This has a manifest reference to the covenant between the Father and Son, and to its existing before the creation of the world. Mr. B. says, "According to your representation of this subject, the covenant of redemption which you suppose was made in eternity, is the *new* covenant, I suppose, in contradistinction from the covenant of works, which was made with Adam in Paradise." p. 218. Every covenant, which God ever made with his creatures, existed in his own mind from eternity. This was the case with the covenant made with Adam. Covenants take their names of *new* and *old*, *former* and *later*, according to the order in which they are manifested to creatures. The covenant of *grace*, which is called *new*, is the fruit of this covenant of redemption; but is perfectly distinct from it. The covenant of redemption is between the Persons of the Godhead; the covenant of grace is between them, and repenting believing sinners. The covenant of redemption was fully made before the world began; but the

covenant of grace was made with none, until after the creation and fall of man. The author of the Letters in replying to my Sermon, has confounded this distinction, and his reader would naturally suppose that there was none kept up in the Sermon itself.

But it is time that we bring this matter to a focal point, that we may see how the existence of the covenant of redemption, will establish the doctrine of the certain perseverance of the saints. Here is a covenant between the Persons of the Trinity, concerning the salvation of sinners. Every covenant, properly so called, is *conditional*. This is the case with the covenant of redemption. But as the Persons covenanting are Divine Persons, and all united in the essence of the Godhead, there cannot be the least possible doubt of their fulfilling their covenant engagements. In this covenant, the second person in the Godhead engaged to become Mediator in the human nature. He covenanted, in this nature to obey the law, and endure its curse, and thus to magnify the law and make it honorable.—The sinless perfection of the human nature of Christ, was essential to the fulfilling of the covenant of redemption; but there was also a covenant engagement, to secure this perfection. This is made evident by what we find, Isa. xlii. 6. "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and *will hold thine hand*, and *will keep thee*, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles." Now let us inquire,—Was there any engagement made that the Son, by offering himself a sacrifice for sin, should actually save any sinners? I think nothing can be more evident than this; that a church of redeemed sinners was promised him. *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.* The Father, to whom it belongs in the economy of redemption, to have mercy on whom he will have mercy, is represented as having given some of the lost race of Adam to his Son, in such a sense, that the Son can claim them as his promised reward. These the Father has engaged by the influence of his Holy Spirit, to draw to his Son. *All the Father giveth me shall come to me.* If these never were effectually drawn to the Son, so as to become united to him, the engagement of the Father would fail, and the covenant of redemption

would be broken. These which were given him by the Father, and which come to him, he stands engaged to receive and to keep, so that no one of them shall be lost. "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing." If one sheep is lost from the fold, the Son disobeys the will of his Father, and breaks covenant with him. In his mediatorial character he is invested with universal dominion, having power over all flesh, that he might be able to give eternal life to as many as were given him. John xvii. 2. In his prophetic office, he stands engaged to provide them with instruction; in his priestly office, to present his own blood before the mercy seat in their behalf, and make intercession for them, and particularly to pray the Father for the descent and indwelling of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to lead them into the truth, and to keep them in the love of God. As a king he stands engaged to rule over them, to defend and protect them, and deliver them out of the hand of all their enemies. This covenant also necessarily implies an engagement on the part of the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, to descend in conformity to the intercession of Christ; to draw to him those given him by the Father, and to abide in them forever; to convince them of sin, and to manifest to them the things of Christ; and in this way to be employed in perfecting the union between him and his members.

Now it is evident, that the covenant of redemption is made between the Persons of the Godhead, and them alone. If these Divine Persons keep and fulfil covenant engagements to each other, all the good promised in the covenant will be fully realized. The covenant was made *concerning* sinners of the human race, but it was not made *with* them. They had no voice in the matter. Neither was there any such *proviso* in this covenant, as there was in the oath which Abraham laid upon his servant, whom he was about to send to obtain a wife for his son. In that oath the servant said, "Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me:" Abraham replies, "If the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath." But when, in relation to the covenant of redemption, it

is said, "The Lord hath sworn and will not repent," we do not obtain the idea that any thing was left at uncertainty. The Father did not say to his Son, Thou shalt have a mystical bride, provided the woman shall be willing to follow thee. No, the promise is, she *shall be willing* in the day of thy power. "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death." Mr. B. represents me as saying, "The covenant of grace is *un*conditional."—This is quite a mistake, which I shall show in its proper place. I do not even say, that the covenant of redemption is unconditional. But this we say, (and we desire to be understood,) that the covenant of redemption, seeing it is made between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, has none of its conditions fulfilled by *us*. Therefore it was said in the Sermon which is animadverted upon in the Letter now before us; "It, (i. e. the covenant of redemption,) did not depend on any conditions to be performed by man. The Son did not engage to become a Saviour, provided the children of men should consent to receive him in that character; the Father did not engage to give his Son some of the children of men, as the reward of his dying love, on condition they could be persuaded to accept of him for their Saviour; but he promised him, that he should see of the travail of his soul; that his people should be willing.* In his covenant with his Father, Christ did not engage conditionally, that he would keep believers from falling, provided they were willing to be kept; but he engaged, that of all the Father should give him, he would lose nothing, but raise it up at the last day. In this blessed covenant, which is the spring of all our hopes, the Holy Spirit became engaged, without conditions to be performed by men, to renew and sanctify the hearts of all those whom the Father gave to the Son. In this covenant there were no parties, except the Divine Trinity. If God is faithful and true, and *cannot deny himself*, then true believers cannot, any of them, be finally lost." Sermons pp. 108, 109. So we

* Believing is a condition of the covenant of *grace*, but not of the covenant of *redemption*.

wrote then, and so we believe now. And we see nothing in Mr. B's. strictures upon the Sermon, which is calculated to change our opinion. He has brought texts to prove, that salvation is promised to sinners on condition of their *believing*. This we are not at all disposed to controvert: but what is this to the point? This does not prove that God has made no promise to his Son, that he shall have a seed to serve him, except a promise which is suspended on conditions to be performed by men. The promises made to the Son, are on conditions to be performed by *him*, and not by them. And since these conditions are considered as being already performed, the promises are now made to him in the most unconditional language: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Psal. cx. 3. "A seed shall serve him, it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation." Psal. xxii. 30. "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see the travail of his soul." Isa. liii. 10, 11. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Isa. lv. 11. "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Jer. xxxii 40. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." John v. 25. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." John vi. 37. These, and many other such promises, most properly belong to the covenant of redemption, and they are so many explicit declarations of the full purpose of the triune Jehovah, to fulfil the covenant, and cause all the good contained in it to be realized. They are more particularly expressive of the faithfulness of the Father, in granting to his Son all those blessings for our wretched world, which he promised on condition of his becoming a sin-offering for us. These promises which have just been introduced, are limited by no conditions to be performed on the part of sinners. It is not, "thy people shall be willing," provided they will do something to make themselves willing; and "a seed shall serve him," if any can be found which will consent to serve

Him: but to the Redeemer the promise is absolute; that he shall have a willing people,—that he shall have a seed to serve him. And to him the promise is absolute, that this people, which is made willing, shall be kept by the power of God, and that they shall not depart from him. There is no promise of the Father to the Son, that his people shall not have their transgression visited with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes; but in connexion with this, there is a "*nevertheless*, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." They are accepted in the Beloved, they are preserved in Christ Jesus If they sin, they have an Advocate with the Father. This safety of the real disciples of Christ, is, in the first place, secured by the Father's promise to him, and by his engagement to the Father. If therefore we have not misunderstood what we call the covenant of redemption, we have found an unshaken rock, on which to build our hopes of the infallible connexion between grace here, and glory hereafter.

Let us now see how the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, can be proved by *the covenant of grace*. This is in scripture called the covenant of *promise*, and the covenant of *peace*. The existence of such a covenant not being disputed, we shall not need to spend any time to prove that it does exist. Neither shall I dispute against the covenant's being *conditional*. I have always viewed the covenant of grace as conditional; and the covenant of redemption also. In the covenant of redemption, the conditions are all fulfilled by the sacred Three in One, for the covenant is between them alone: But as the covenant of grace is established with *men*, there are conditions required on their part. Men are required to repent and believe, as conditions of being forgiven and saved. Salvation is not promised to all men, nor to any man, *unconditionally*. Some suppose, that conditions on the part of sinners, imply something meritorious in them. This is a mistake, for there can be conditions in a covenant of grace, as properly as in a covenant of works.

Conditions in a covenant do not always imply *uncertainty*. We have seen that the conditions in the covenant of redemption, did not imply any uncertainty, for

it was absolutely certain that those conditions would be most exactly fulfilled. Therefore sinners were saved during the space of four thousand years, on what the Saviour had undertaken to perform, but had not as yet, by actually performing it, fulfilled the conditions of that covenant, without which none could consistently have been saved. We are ready to grant, that a covenant made between God and *man*, has not the same reasons for being immutable, as a covenant between the Persons of the Godhead; for we know it is a very possible thing for man to break covenant with God. This was proved by what took place in the garden of Eden. But it is possible for a covenant between God and men, to be stable. *God* can establish *our hearts*. As the covenant of grace grows out of the covenant of redemption, and is the fruit of it, there must be a harmony between the two covenants.

One thing which the Saviour engaged in the covenant of redemption, was to make a propitiation for the sin of the whole world, so as to open the door of mercy to all. This lays a foundation to send his ministers into all the world, to preach the gospel to every creature. These ministering servants are to unfold the plan of reconciliation, and call on all who hear them, to fall in with it. They have full power to promise on the part of their Divine Master, that those who repent shall be forgiven, and that those who believe shall be justified and saved. As repentance and faith are the exercises of our hearts, they may be said to be conditions performed by us, which bring us into the bonds of the covenant. But tho' repentance and faith are conditions, by which we take hold of the covenant of grace, the very existence of these new dispositions in us, is the covenant of redemption going into effect. Such promises as these are now fulfilling; "He shall see his seed." "A new heart will I give them." That also is now verified, which is spoken of the risen and ascended Redeemer, Acts v. 31; "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a Saviour, for to *give repentance* to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." The covenant of redemption could not be fulfilled, without the giving of repentance to those who were given to Christ, as a seed to serve him. But God does

not see fit to send a message to this seed, while in their impenitent state, to inform them, that they are among the number which Christ is to save. He does not send them the names of those who were given to the Redeemer in the covenant of redemption; but he sends them the covenant of grace which God establishes with men, and invites them to accede to its most reasonable terms. And until by the special influence of the Holy Spirit, they are enabled to fall in with this, they cannot know that they were particularly included in that covenant which was made between the Father and the Son, before the foundation of the world.

Now, to make the covenant of grace to correspond with the covenant of redemption, there must be a promise made to every believer, that he shall have *grace and strength given him, to enable him to persevere unto the end.* We have seen that the covenant between the Persons of the Godhead, makes it certain, that, of all those given to the Son, and who come to him, not one should be lost. It would be in perfect consistency with this, that the covenant of grace should contain promises to *believers themselves* that they shall have a sufficiency of grace, to enable them to hold out to the end. Such promises, it is evident, this covenant does contain.—"My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Cor. xii. 9. "They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever." Psal. cxxv. 1. "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." Isa. xxvii. 3.

But it will be asked, Does not the covenant of grace require perseverance from us, as a condition of our salvation, after we become believers? We do not hesitate to say, it does. Living by faith and a continuance in well-doing, are as necessary conditions of salvation, as believing, in the first instance, is a necessary condition. But strength to fulfil these conditions, must come from God, and this strength he promises; therefore the conditions will be complied with by all *true* believers. Believers are not told by name, that they are interested in the covenant: but just so far as they have evidence, that they possess the character of believers,

they have assurance that they will be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Their evidence, that they possess the character of believers, is in proportion to their fulfilling the required conditions of the covenant. As their evidence increases, that they are *now* interested in the covenant, they have increasing assurance, that all the special blessings, promised to such, do in reality belong to them; and among these special blessings, a sufficiency of grace to keep them from falling, is one of the greatest. The Lord keeps these hidden ones, as the apple of his eye. Deut. xxxii. 10.

We shall now look at the proofs brought forward by Mr. Bangs in opposition to our doctrine, and in support of theirs.

I. We shall pay some attention to the texts of scripture which he has introduced. At one quotation he introduces the three following passages: *If thou seek him he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him he will cast thee off forever.* 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. *And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed.* Isa. i. 28. *When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby.* Ezek. xxxiii. 18.

There is nothing in our doctrine to oppose the destruction of those who forsake the Lord, i. e. of those who utterly forsake him. But we think the scripture is clear in determining, that they who do thus forsake the Lord, make it evident, that their hearts were never right with him. "They went out from us," saith the apostle John, "but they *were not* of us." Mr. B. observes, "But St. John does not say they were *never* of them: but only they were not of them at the time they went out." p. 238. This in reality makes the apostle to say nothing. There could be no question, whether they were with the apostle and his brethren, at the time when they forsook them: but he most obviously meant to say; that these apostates had now shown themselves out: For he adds, "If they *had been* of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be *made manifest*, that they were not all of us." 1 John ii. 19. The question is asked concerning

the hypocrite, Job xxvii. 10, *Will he always call on God?* This implies, that it is characteristic of hypocrites, and not of sound believers, to forsake God. Whose house is it which falls;—the house of him who built on the rock; or of him who built on the sand? Mat. vii. 24—27. Whose lamps were they which went out;—the lamps of those who took oil in their vessels; or of those who took *no oil?* Mat. xxv. 1—8. What seed is it which withers away under the scorching beams of the sun;——is it that which takes root in a good soil; or is it that which, being resisted by the rock, has *no root?* Mat. xiii. 3—8.

But it may be said, If those who forsake God are just like other sinners, who never loved God, why are threatenings denounced against *them* in particular; and why are they threatened with punishment for this particular sin? To this it may be replied; There is the same propriety in this, as there is in having threatenings denounced against the liar, the profane swearer, the thief, the drunkard, the adulterer, the extortioner, &c. There are some general and comprehensive threatenings, which include all classes of wicked men. Such as these; "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." Some might think, that because these threatenings comprehend all the sinners in the world, other threatenings would be needless. But God is wiser than man, and it has seemed good to him, to point the threatenings of his word against our sinful character, in *every manifestation* of it. Whatever way the sinner turns, he will find the flaming sword turns with him, and is pointed at his breast. If he make the wickedness of his heart manifest by *lying*, he is told that "*all liars* shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." If his wickedness be manifested by *murder*, or by *adultery*, or *theft*, or *drunkenness* or *covetousness*, there is a threatening presents itself adapted to his particular sin. So there is a particular threatening for those who will not call on the name of the Lord. This is calculated to arrest *their* attention. There is another threatening calculated more exactly to fit the case of the hypocrite, who has left off calling on the name of the Lord. Sin-

ners are threatened, whose attention cannot be drawn to things of religion. "I have called and ye refused." Sinners are also threatened who forsake the Lord, and renounce the religion which they once appeared to embrace. We can see great wisdom in the *particular*, as well as in the *general* threatenings of God's word; tho' the latter include the former. This method of particularizing the threatenings against sin, is well calculated to find out the enemies of the Lord. In this way Divine Wisdom, not only goes out into the broad way, and declares to us, considered as one great company of transgressors, that our way will lead to destruction; but she follows *every sinner* into his *own path*, and warns him that this particular path will lead him down to the chambers of death. This is, in other words, to tell him; that the path where *he* travels, is one of the paths, which is in "the broad way which sinners go." In the Letters before us, it is said; "It should be carefully noted that apostates are threatened *for* their apostasy, and not for what they were *previous* to their fall." p. 239. From this the author would infer, that their fall effected a real change in their character, that therefore, antecedent to their fall, their character must have been good, even in the sight of the Searcher of hearts. But might we not with equal propriety infer, that because *liars* are threatened for telling lies, and *drunkards* for intoxication, and not for what they were antecedent to their telling lies and becoming intoxicated; therefore, previous to their running into these particular vices, their characters were holy? The truth is, that before this, they were under the comprehensive threatening which includes all impenitent sinners; and now, as soon as their character makes a new display of itself, a new, and more *appropriate* threatening of divine wrath, stares them in the face.

While apostates remained in the fellowship of the church, and appeared like the children of the kingdom, they were included in the *general* denunciation of divine wrath against the impenitent. They were also under that more particular threatening, denounced against such as draw near to God with their mouths, and honor him with their lips, while their heart is far from him. But when they came to apostatize from

their apparent attachment to religion, then a new arrow from that divine quiver, which is full of arrows, pierced them. As sinners go on from one degree of wickedness to another, the denunciations of divine wrath become more terrible. This will furnish an answer to the question, put by our author: "If they were always hypocrites, why are they threatened with a sorer punishment for having apostatized?" Let it be remembered, that apostasy is not a frank and humble acknowledgment, made by the hypocrite, that he has been insincere. No, the way in which he reveals his hypocrisy, is by contemptuously treading under foot those infinite realities, of the truth of which he has been convinced, and which he has even once professed to love. Here is aggravated wickedness, and therefore sorer punishments are threatened.

Mr. B. observes concerning the text in Ezek. xxxiii. 18; "To this text some have objected, That the righteous spoken of were self righteous—but this is a miserable evasion to avoid the point of truth. A self righteous man is a wicked man. And would it not be perfect nonsense to say to a wicked man, that if he turned from his *wickedness*, and committeth *iniquity*, all his *wickedness* should not be remembered, but for his *wickedness* he should surely die!" p. 232. The sentiment which is here opposed, was not advanced in the Sermon on Perseverance. There it was said: "From a profession of godliness a man may turn away. It is not self-righteousness which he professes, but the true righteousness of faith; and he is said to turn away from that which he professes to have, though he has it not in reality." Sermons, p. 117. The text in Ezekiel is not designed to teach us, that if this righteous man had continued as he was, he would have been saved; but rather to teach us how vain it is, to make our dependence upon, and expect to be saved, by a religion which does not endure unto the end. *He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved*; and the hopes of all others are vain.

The next passage which Mr. B. brings forward, in support of his doctrine, is John xv. 6. *If a man abide not in me he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they*

are burned. He argues that being *in* Christ must imply a vital union with him. There is no doubt but this is the truest, and best sense in which any man is in Christ. It is also true, that this is the most proper sense in which we are members of the church. "He is a Jew who is one *inwardly.*" They, who are of the synagogue of satan, lie when they say they are Jews, for they are not. They lie, who say they belong to the church of Christ, if they have not the spirit of Christ. And yet in another point of view, many such are in the church; for the kingdom of heaven is compared to a net that was cast into the sea, which gathered of all kinds, both bad and good. To us it appears manifest, that by what the Saviour says about the Vine and the branches, in the 15th chapter of John, he designs to exhibit to our view his *whole church*, in its present imperfect state; the same as he means to exhibit by the parable of the net cast into the sea, and the parable of the ten virgins. His church is imperfect in these two respects; it has some bad members, and the good members are not as yet purged from all iniquity. In the portion of scripture before us, both these kinds of imperfection are noticed. Here are two kinds of branches, said to be in the true Vine; namely, branches which *bear* fruit, and branches which *do not bear* fruit. We also notice, that the fruitful branches need purging, or pruning, to render them more fruitful: This implies the sinful imperfection of real saints. It is worthy of particular notice, that there is a blessed promise, which is worth more than a mine of gold, made to every fruitful branch; That it shall be purged to render it more fruitful. And certainly the same promise will apply when it shall become more fruitful, that it shall still be purged to render it yet more fruitful. What is here said about the Vine and the branches, was obviously designed to apply to Christ and his church, in different periods of time: and yet this particular address, "Now are *ye clean* through the word which I have spoken unto you, might particularly mean his eleven disciples, who were the only hearers which he then had. The command which followed, was most strictly proper; *Abide in me.* It has nothing in it repugnant to our views of the certain perseverance of the saints; neither has the

caution which follows that command:—*As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine: no more can ye, except ye abide in me.* When Paul was on his voyage to Rome, the angel of God appeared to him, and said, *Lo God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.* Soon after, *Paul said to the centurion, and to the soldiers, Except these,* (that is the shipmen,) *abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.* And this is true concerning those who have the fullest promises of eternal salvation; Except they *abide* in Christ they cannot be saved.

In that part of his Letter, where Mr. B. undertakes to prove the possibility of the saints' falling so as to perish, he brings forward but one other text of scripture; and that is Heb. vi. 4—6. *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*

This, it is acknowledged, is a difficult passage. There have been different opinions entertained about it among those who are convinced that a real convert was never lost. Some view it as a supposition of an impossible case, like that in Gal. i. 8, for the sake of establishing the doctrine of the immutability of the covenant of grace. It has long been my prevailing belief, (and my mind is now satisfied with it,) that this text is descriptive of *real apostasies* from the christian faith. The following reasons lead me to this conclusion:

1st. In the verses which immediately succeed this text, the apostle describes two different kinds of ground, which, under the same rains and sun-shine, bring forth entirely different fruits. This he connects with the preceding text by the illative particle, *For.* He seems to say—In the same church and under the same kind of cultivation, there are two sorts of members; some who really love Christ, and who will adhere to him to the end, and some, who, though they appear well for a while, will fall away, and crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

2dly. As soon as the apostle had illustrated the matter by these two different kinds of soil, he adds, *But, below-*

ed, we are persuaded better things of you and things which accompany salvation though we thus speak. For God it not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. Here the apostle seems to say to the Hebrew christians that he did not suspect them, or entertain peculiar fears of their apostatizing, though he had put this alarming *caveat* into his epistle. On the contrary he was persuaded better things of them. He believed that they had the fruits of a genuine faith and love; even such fruits as were connected with *salvation*. By this he seemed to say, that the things of which he wrote in the preceding verses, were not such things as *insured* salvation.

3dly. Another thing which leads me to believe that the apostle is, in this controverted passage, describing real apostates, is this; that it is known that real apostasies do take place, and those which are very wonderful; where professed converts seem to mount up to heaven, and then fall down to hell, openly deriding, and contemning the religion which they once professed, and in which they had seemed to take great delight. And these apostates are described, in the other parts of the scripture, in language which much resembles the language of the text before us. See Heb. x. 26—29. Mat. xii. 43—45. 2 Pet. ii. 20—22.

If then it is acknowledged, that this passage describes real apostasies from the christian faith, does it not, it will be said, describe apostasy from *real religion?* I am ready to acknowledge, that the words here used to express the attainments of such as may fall away and perish, are very expressive, for words to be applied to attainments which fall short of true grace: And if the passage were wholly insulated, and this were all the light which could be obtained on the subject now in controversy between us, it would not be unnatural to infer from it, the possibility of falling from a state of grace into a state of condemnation: But the connexion of the passage with its context, and with the whole current of revelation, forbids this construction.* In the same

* No important gospel doctrine rests on an insulated text for its support. By quoting a text disconnected from its context,

chapter, in which this difficult text is found, there is much to support the doctrine of certain perseverance. One thing we have already noticed, namely this; that after the apostle had spoken of these high attainments, from which they might fall away, he speaks of *better* things, and things which *accompany salvation*. And he speaks of it, as if the righteousness (meaning the holy faithfulness) of God, would not suffer him to forget to reward these better things, which were evidences of love to him and to his people. He then speaks of a full assurance of hope, as a thing attainable in this life. A full assurance of hope, does not mean merely a full persuasion of a present interest in the love of God, but it implies an assured hope of obtaining the kingdom of heaven. But how can any one attain to this assured hope, if falling from unfeigned faith be possible? If *one* such may fall, how do I know but that I shall be the one? God does not send any particular message from heaven, to tell me that I shall not be the one who will fall. But if he has promised, and sworn to it, that *all* the real subjects of his grace shall arrive in glory, then if I have become assured of this thing; that I am now a subject of his grace, I may have a full assurance of hope. And this seems to be the basis, on which the apostle rested this assured hope of which he spake: *Wherein God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast.*

But it will be asked whether, *being enlightened*, does not imply a holy discernment, such as natural men have not. Sometimes it undoubtedly implies this; but there is no necessity of supposing that "being enlightened," always implies so much as a holy discernment. Our

the Socinian would prove from 1 Tim. ii. 5, that Christ Jesus was only a *man*: and those who deny the real humanity of Christ, would support themselves by John i. 1. In this way, Antinomians might build up themselves on Rom. iii. 28: and modern Pharisees, whatever their particular name, would seem to get strength from James ii. 21.

opponents, when they would disprove total depravity, contend that every man is enlightened, and yet they do not pretend to think that every man is justified. Being "made partakers of the Holy Ghost," *may* mean, his sanctifying influence; it may also refer to the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, which were enjoyed in the primitive church, and which were not confined to real believers. It may also refer to that deep impression and pungent conviction, which the unconverted now partake of, by means of the out-pouring of the Spirit.

"*Tasting* the heavenly gift," and "*tasting* the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," seem to be high expressions, to be applied to the exercises and enjoyments of unrenewed men. We know that *tasting*, is, in other places of scripture, made use of to express a holy and experimental knowledge of God and divine things. But it is also the case with many other words and phrases; that they are sometimes used to express what is peculiar to the experimental christian, and at other times they are applied to the exercises and feelings of such, as have not known the grace of God in truth. To *know* God, is sometimes descriptive of such a spiritual knowledge of him, as is peculiar to the converted: but it does not always mean this.

Joy in the things of religion, is sometimes spoken of as peculiar to the saints. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy," &c. Gal. v. 22. It is spoken of as an evidence of the sincerity of Zaccheus, that he received Christ *joyfully*; also of the believing Eunuch, that he went on his way *rejoicing*. Yet the stony ground hearers, who never had any root in them, are said to have received the word anon with *joy*. That which in the other cases, was expressive of grace, did not here express so much; for there can be no grace where the seed takes no root in the heart. When Paul, 1 Cor. vi. 11, says, "But ye are *washed*, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified," he undoubtedly means that theirs was the washing of regeneration: But when Peter says, 1st epistle, ii. 22, "But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is returned to his own vomit again; and, the sow that was *washed* to her wallowing in the mire;" we are not naturally led to

understand him, by *washed*, to mean the same thing. Peter, by *washing*, seems to mean such an outward reformation, as proceeds from no change of nature. It is strikingly illustrated by the sow, which can be washed and made white, while the swinish nature being unchanged, will soon discover itself by her returning to wallow in the mire.

In view of all this it may be asked, How shall we know when these words and phrases, which are sometimes made use of to distinguish a work of grace, and yet are sometimes applied to the experiences of graceless sinners, may be considered as belonging to the one, and when to the other? To this it may be replied; That a close attention to the connexion, will commonly enable us to determine in what sense the inspired writer intends to use the word, or phrase, in the passage which we shall at any time have occasion to examine. Thus, if we hear the inspired writer say; "They that *know* thy name will put their *trust* in thee," we are none at loss but that by knowing the name of God, in this place, he must mean a spiritual and holy knowledge; for the effect of this knowledge is a *trusting* in God. But when the inspired writer tells us, "That when they *knew* God, they *glorified him not* as God, neither were thankful," we are at once led to conceive of their knowledge of God, as not including right exercises of heart. When Peter speaks of believers as loving their unseen Saviour, and rejoicing in him with a joy unspeakable and full of glory, we are irresistibly led to conceive of this as a holy joy,—as a blessed prelibation of the joy of their Lord, into which they are about soon to enter. It is *love to Christ* which causes the joy, and besides, it is described as being *full of glory*. But when we are informed of a certain class of hearers who receive the word with joy, and yet at the same time, are said to have no root, we are immediately led to think of those *false* joys in the things of religion, which false converts are the subjects of; and in which for a while they often seem greatly to abound. If the scripture is evidently speaking of real saints, and it describes them as having "*tasted* that the Lord is gracious," then *tasting* is to be understood as expressive

of a sweet and holy sense of the goodness of God: but if the scripture is evidently contrasting attainments which may be lost, with certain *better things* which accompany salvation, then "tasting of the heavenly gift, and of the good word of God, and of the powers of the world to come," ought to be understood to express something short of true grace. It may intend much the same which is expressed, in the parable of the sower, by *receiving the word with joy*. This description of the exercises and comforts of false converts, is not given at length, like that in Hebrews, but it may include as much. The phrase, *receiving the word with joy*, would, if taken by itself, as naturally lead us to think of a true conversion, as the passage which we have had under consideration: But there is something, in close connexion with it, which lets us know that the joy was all without foundation. And that the same is true concerning the text now before us, has, we think, been shown. If that does not include as much as this, it is probable, that miraculous gifts, and enlightening by the Holy Ghost, is the thing in which the case, supposed in the epistle of the Hebrews, differs from the case stated in the parable; and from any other case which can now occur. In the primitive church, cases could exist, where they might speak with tongues, and have the gift of prophecy, and of understanding mysteries, and have faith so that they could remove mountains, and yet not be possessed of charity, or any saving grace. See 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3. "Many," says our divine Lord, "will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I *never* knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity." Mat. vii. 22, 23. Those, who were thus favored with the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, would by this means have very striking, and peculiar proofs of the divine reality of the christian religion. Openly apostatizing from this religion, and speaking contemptuously of it, after having the truth of it demonstrated to them by the Spirit, by the means of miraculous gifts, with which they themselves had been furnished; might amount to that blas-

pheming of the Holy Ghost, which constitutes the *unpardonable sin.**

* If a right explanation of Heb. vi. 4—6, has been given in the preceding pages, it is a passage to which we ought to give diligent heed, for it contains important instruction. 1. We are admonished not to be stumbled at great apostasies from the christian faith. Men may seem to mount up to heaven, and then fall down to hell. Even the *teachers* of this holy religion, who have been thought great and good, may become *heretics* and *infidels*. Such apostasies do not prove, that the religion of the gospel is not true: neither do they prove, that true grace can be lost. "Be not offended, if you see great cedars fall, stars fall from heaven, great professors die and decay: Do not think they be all such: Do not think that the elect shall fall." *Shepard's Parable of the ten virgins*. 2. Those who have great enjoyments in religion, and great anticipations of future blessedness, are admonished not to suffer these enjoyments and anticipations, to prevent them from looking well to their foundation. They are admonished not to depend on the height of their joys, nor on the wonderfulness of their discoveries.—They may be at first greatly alarmed, and then greatly comforted, so as to seem to *taste of the powers of the world to come*, and still fall away and perish. Let them inquire whether *unselfish love*, and *unfeigned humility* lie at the foundation of their raptures, and of all their religious comforts. 3. By this solemn portion of scripture they are admonished, who, tho' destitute of a hope, are thoughtful about the things which relate to their salvation:——they are admonished to be on their guard against delusive joys. Let them see to it, that they dig deep, and build on the eternal Rock. Many a house has been built high, whose foundation rested on the sand. There is but little hope of convincing the man, whose house is already built upon the sand, that his foundation is bad. There is more encouragement to use means with those, who as yet have built no house, to dissuade them from a careless inattention to their foundation. O that every awakened sinner might be apprised of his danger, and see to it, that he does not take up with slight evidences of a change of heart!

Before we leave this interesting and awakening portion of the lively oracles, let us drop a word of caution to distressed souls, to prevent them from being too hasty to draw the conclusion, that they have committed the unpardonable sin. This sin is described by our Saviour, as a *blaspheming of the Holy Ghost*, and *speaking against the Holy Ghost*. If the text which has been before us, describes this sin, it supposes, that in the case stated, the commission of it is preceded by great light and conviction, and by false joys: and that these are followed with a complete apostasy.

II. Mr. Bangs makes use of the fall of angels, and of Adam, as an argument to favor the possibility of the saints falling from grace. He inquires: "Had Satan and his legions only a profession of godliness, antecedent to their apostasy? And Adam and Eve, were they only painted sepulchres when they came perfect from the hands of their Maker?" p. 236. We do not hold, (and we wish our opponents, once for all, would understand us;) we do not hold, that the holiness of the saints on earth, or the holiness of the saints in heaven, is in its own nature *inamissible*, i. e. incapable of being lost. We know that the primitive state of angels, and of man, was a state of perfect holiness; we also know, that if creatures could fall from a state of perfect holiness, it must be, in itself considered, possible for them to fall from a state of imperfect holiness. Therefore we do not at all build our argument in favor of Perseverance, upon the *degree* of holiness which there is in the hearts of the children of God. The degree of holiness increases the scriptural evidence that I am a child; but it does not increase the certainty, that a real child of God, whoever he is, will persevere to the end. It may increase the evidence that the particular man, James, or John, or whoever he may be, that is favored with these large measures of grace, will persevere to the end, because it increases the evidence of his being a *real saint*; and the matter is previously made certain, that every real saint will persevere unto the end and be saved. If there were no such previous assurance, that all the real children of God would be preserved from falling, it would be a proof of pride and self-sufficiency, for any one to have this persuasion concerning *himself*. But in the Methodist Doct. and Discip. it is granted, that when Paul expressed such a firm persuasion, that nothing should separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, (Rom. viii. 38, 39,) he "was at that time fully persuaded of his own perseverance. And I doubt not," says the writer, "but many believers at this day have the same persuasion, termed in scripture, the full assurance of hope." Doct. and Discip. p. 93. I would ask such believers, why they have this persuasion? Does not such a per-

suasion imply, that it is not possible for them to fall? But will they pretend, that they are more holy than our first parents were, when they came perfect from the hands of their Maker? Or that they are more holy than angels in heaven? On what then do they build this persuasion, if not the present strength of their love to God? If it be not built on this, it must be built on some supposed revelation which God has made to *them* in particular, to let them know that *they* are to be saved; unless they build their persuasion on the general promise, that *believers* shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation? To build on the great degree of love which they feel in their hearts, to make it sure they shall persevere, is to trust their own hearts, which is *folly*. To build hopes of perseverance on some supposed revelation made to them in particular, is *enthusiasm*. But to build hopes of perseverance on promises, made to all believers, that the Lord will be their Shepherd, not only to feed them, but to keep them, and restore their souls, and lead them in paths of righteousness for his name's sake, is to build on a *sure foundation*.

Let it now be clearly understood, that we build all our hopes of the certain perseverance of all the sanctified, not on the *inamissibleness* of their sanctification, but upon the nature of the covenant into which they are thereby brought. The covenant of grace is established upon better promises, than the covenant of works. It is ordained in the hands of a Mediator, who says to to such as are brought into the covenant, "Because I live, ye shall live also." "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." "God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1 Cor. x. 13. I would now demand of our theological opponents, whether they do not perceive a perfect difference between the state of the christian, walled around with such promises as these; and the state of Adam in Paradise, and of angels in heaven, while not confirmed in holiness? Was there any promise in the covenant of works, that a faithful God would not suffer them to be

tempted above what they were able to bear, and that with the temptation he would make a way to escape?

To us it is most evident, that the Bible saints built all their assurance of salvation on the better promises of the new covenant; even of that covenant which is ordered in all things, and sure to all the seed. When Paul, in the close of the 8th chapter of Romans, expressed such a full persuasion concerning his own salvation, and the salvation of his brethren, it was most manifestly in view of the golden chain of grace, which he saw fastened to the throne of God. It was in the same chapter where he had said; "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit:" and where he had said; "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God:" and where he had said; "Moreover whom he did predestinate them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified them he also glorified. What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" He proceeds to put these unanswerable questions: "He that spared his own Son—how shall he not with him freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?——Who is he that condemneth?——Who shall separate us from the love of God?——For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life——shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

This view of christian doctrines, leads the believer to build all his hopes of heaven, and his assurance of being enabled to persevere, on *covenanted grace;* and this is the only scheme of doctrine, which completely leads him out of himself. By this he is taught to depend upon Christ, not only to keep him while he continues to believe and obey, but to depend upon Christ alone, to preserve within him a spirit of faith and obedience. The difference which on this point, exists between us and the Arminians, will be easily perceived by adverting to an illustration of their doctrine, which is made use of by Mr. B. in his Letters, p. 244: "A friend says to a drowning man, 'Hold fast to my hand,

and I will draw you from the water." Does the drowning man save himself in this instance, or does his friend deliver him?" Here one of the most essential things in the doctrine of salvation by free grace, is left out of sight. It is true, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is manifested in saving the sinner who by faith lays hold, and who by faith keeps hold of his hand; but this is not revealing *all* his grace. His grace is most gloriously manifested, in giving the sinner a heart to lay hold of him by faith, and in giving him a heart to keep hold by the same faith, even unto the end.

The view which we have taken of the covenant of grace, as securing by promise the perseverance of all real saints, is the only scheme of grace, which really admits of an assured hope of salvation. On no other scheme can any one know that he shall ever go to heaven, until he has arrived there. In the first covenant, the covenant of works made with sinless creatures, it could not be known to any one, that he should persevere to the end of his *probation*, until that season of probation had actually expired. For, tho' there was a firm promise of life to the obedient, there was no promise which secured the continuation of an obedient temper to those who were now obedient. Therefore the first covenant did not admit of such a thing, as an assured hope of eternal blessedness while the season of trial lasted. The tenor of that covenant was, "Hold fast to my hand," and you shall be safe: But there was no promise which said, *I will hold thy hand, and will keep thee:* There was no promise which said, *As thy days, so shall thy strength be.* Therefore there could then be no persuasion, that he who had begun a good work would perform it.

III. It is objected against our doctrine; "It renders useless a great part of the Bible; for it must be admitted that there are innumerable places where the condition of salvation is expressed. Such as, *If ye endure—Be thou faithful—If ye hold fast the beginning of your confidence to the end—Strive to enter in at the strait gate—If ye do these things ye shall never fall—If these things be in you and abound.* We have also a great many cautions, *Quench not the Spirit, &c.* If there be no possibility of final apostasy, all these con-

ditions, to the performance of which the promise is made; and all these cautions are entirely useless." p. 249. I would ask my antagonist, whether that revelation, which God made to his servant Paul, concerning the temporal salvation of all who were with him in the ship, did not make it certain that they would all get to land? I would also ask, whether we are to consider the apostle as having forgotten this revelation, when he said afterwards, *Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.* Here was a divine promise made to Paul, concerning the personal salvation of a particular number, known by name; and yet he never thought, nor did they think, of relaxing attention to the means of preserving their lives. He exhorted them to take some meat for their health; and exhorted them to prevent the sailors from leaving the ship. They pressed the ship as near to the shore as possible, and then used all suitable means to escape from the wreck to the land. Now, if means were not only useful, but absolutely necessary in this case;—if they could even be urged as a *sine qua non*, by him who had declared from the mouth of God, that they should all get safe to land; who will dare to say, that the certainty of the saints' perseverance, renders useless all cautions and exhortations, and makes all conditions absurd? Concerning the ship, the truth was, God had absolutely determined, that all who were in it should be saved from a watery grave, but he had also, with as much absoluteness, determined that this salvation should be in the use of certain means on their part. This laid a foundation to exhort them to use these means, and to tell them, that if these means were neglected they could not be saved.

God has absolutely determined, that there shall be a Millennium of holiness and peace on the earth. He says concerning it, *I the Lord will hasten it in his time.* To effect this, he has determined that his church, before the introduction of the Millennium, shall be brought into a state of spiritual travail, and that by their means gospel light shall be diffused. This makes it proper to exhort the people of God, to awake, all as one man, and strive together in their prayers, to bring forward that glorious day, and to make every effort to spread

the knowledge of Christ through the whole earth. It also makes it proper to say, Except Zion travail, the latter day glory cannot commence,—Except christians use means to diffuse abroad the knowledge of Christ, the world cannnot be saved. But when we use this language, which points out our duty, and the absolute necessity of means, according to the fixed plan of the Most High, we do not express the least doubt of the promises of God, concerning this future glorious day, or of his faithfulness to fulfil them.

According to our views of the covenant of grace, it contains promises which ensure the perseverance of the saints. But we also believe, that they are to persevere in the use of appointed means. It is not determined they shall go to heaven, any more than it is determined, that they shall hold on in the narrow path which leads to it. It is therefore perfectly consistent to say; that except they endure to the end they cannot be saved. And this makes it proper to exhort them, to take heed lest they fall away. Tho' it will probably be granted by our opponents, that Paul had a full assurance of his own salvation; yet he tells us, that he kept under his body and brought it into objection, lest after having preached to others he himself should be a castaway. 1. Cor. ix. 27. In this view of the subject it can be seen, that our scheme of the covenant of grace, *does not render useless* a great part of the Bible. It does not render useless the *conditions*, and *cautions*, with which the scripture abounds.

IV. It is objected that our doctrine of Perseverance is *dangerous*. "Your doctrine," says Mr. B. "is as *dangerous* as it is *comfortless*. If the first act of divine grace is believed to be justification, and if after a sinner has experienced light and conviction, he rests satisfied, believing he cannot so fall as to perish, and if he should be mistaken in his conclusion respecting his own experience, (which I think you will allow is possible that he may be)—Admitting, I say, this to be the case, such a man is in imminent danger of eternal perdition." p. 147.

In addition to the answers given to the preceding objections, which are also applicable to this, we would remark; that the scriptures require all professed be-

lievers, to hold themselves in readiness to attend to the exhortation, *Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith.* Every man should be always ready to prove his own work. Among the evidences of our being in the faith, and of the genuineness of our religion, this is essential; that it should be of that kind which *endures;* which, instead of withering away, grows more flourishing. Here is a man who declares, that ten years ago he was converted; that is to say, ten years ago he drank the living water which none but Christ can give. Is not this one proper question to ask him: Has the water answered to the description which Christ gave of it, in this respect;—that it should prove to be in you a well of *living water?* If he cannot say that this has been the case, we may tell him at once, 'You are mistaken about the water you drank. You might have thought it was Christ's living water, when you drank it; but if it had in reality been this water, it would have answered to the description which he gave of it: for it always constitutes, in the hearts of those who drink it, *a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*'

In the case of the men who were in the ship with Paul, we saw that means were necessary to their safety, after assurance had been given, that they should all escape. The case of believers is somewhat different from that. There, the very *persons* were known, without any respect to character, concerning whom this promise was made. But believers have not the promise of eternal life made to them by name. While they are unbelievers, they cannot know that God designs to save them; and after they become believers, their knowledge of his design to save them, is in proportion to the scriptural evidence which they have of the genuineness of their faith; and this is in proportion to the strength, the purifying effect, and fruitfulness of faith.

When matters are viewed in this point of light, (and in this point of light they ought to be viewed,) the objection, which we are now considering, appears to be without foundation. We will not say, that hypocrites have never abused this doctrine: But shall we withhold the children's bread from them, for fear that

others will make an improper use of it? We will not say, that christians themselves have never abused this precious doctrine. Through remaining corruption, they are liable to abuse all the goodness and mercy of their heavenly Father. But shall we therefore seek to keep out of sight the goodness and mercy of God, because they have been abused?

But say our opponents; Is not our doctrine, of a possibility of falling from grace, the safest? To this it may be replied: If it be truth, it is no doubt the safest. If it be not the truth, it is no doubt a dangerous error. Error, however specious, is always dangerous. It tends to sap the foundation, which supports the great system of truth. The error, (for such we deem it,) that we have now been opposing, strikes at the very life of the covenant of grace. It takes the salvation of the church out of the hands of the Redeemer, and places it in their own fallible hands. It leads them to trust for perseverance on something besides the promises of God, which are all *yea* and *amen* in Christ Jesus. It suffers the gates of hell to prevail against the church. Every thing is put afloat; and whether any of those, who now believe in the Son of God, will ever be with him in glory, is to us a matter of entire uncertainty.

We were just closing this part of our work, when *this sentence* caught our eye: "When you are able to bring *one text* which says a saint cannot thus fall away, it will be time to review the ground; but this you neither have, nor can do, and as to your inferential proof, deduced from the covenant of redemption, and covenant of grace, as it is founded in erroneous conceptions of those covenants, it can never stand against the pointed testimony of scripture." p. 234. If my conceptions of these covenants are entirely erroneous, then it is probable, that the arguments which I have drawn from them, are also erroneous; but if these covenants contain promises, which ensure the salvation of all, who are once united to Christ, then these covenants cannot be far from *direct* proof of the doctrine of the saints' perseverance. If we can show, that in the covenant which the Father has made with the Divine Son, there is a promise, that the covenant shall stand fast with him,—and if we can show, that

this covenant includes blessings for his seed, (i. e. for those who believe in him,) and that it is among the blessings promised, that they shall be made to endure forever;—and if the covenant is particular in this, that their transgressions shall be chastised, but shall not prevail to disinherit them, and prevent them from continuing to receive expressions of his loving kindness, through the medium of their holy Advocate; the inference is very surely drawn; That true believers will not any of them fall away and perish. See Psal. lxxxix. If the Son has declared that his covenant engagements to the Father are such, that of all the Father hath given, he should lose nothing, the inference is not far-fetched, That no believer will ever be lost. See John vi. 37—40.

If in the covenant of rich grace, which the God of Israel makes with those who return to him, not feignedly, but with all the heart, he *confirms* the covenant in Christ;* if they are now made one with Christ so as to be considered members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;†——if he is made of God unto them wisdom, righteousness, *sanctification*, and redemption;‡——if their life is hid with Christ in God, and he has become *their life*,§ so as to say to them, Because I live, ye shall live also;‖——if he promises, that his grace shall be sufficient for them, and his strength made perfect in their weakness;¶——if he promises to succor them when they are tempted, and always make a way for their escape;**——if he keepeth the feet of his saints,†† so that none of their steps shall slide;‡‡—if he promises to restore their souls, and lead them in paths of righteousness for his name's sake;§§——if he promises to put his fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from him;‖‖ and to work in them both to will and to do, of his good pleasure,¶¶ even that which is well pleasing in his sight,***——is there no certainty of their perseverance in faith and well doing? Does all this amount only to inferential proof of the impossibility of their being left to fall away and perish? What

* Gal. iii. 17. † Eph. v. 30. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 30. § Col. iii. 3, 4. ‖ John xiv. 19. ¶ 2 Cor. xii. 9. ** 1 Cor. x. 13. †† 1 Sam. ii. 9. ‡‡ Psal. xxxvii. 31. §§ Psal. xxiii. 3. ‖‖ Jer. xxxii. 40. ¶¶ Phil. ii. 13. *** Heb. xiii. 21.

can be more direct proof of this impossibility, than the promises of God, to keep them by *his* power, through *their* faith unto salvation?*

We have seen how perfectly reconcileable with our views of this doctrine, are those *if's*, which my antagonist seems to consider as foundation enough to support their views of the doctrine. The conditions on which God promises heaven to his people; the *caveats*, and the many pressing exhortations which are addressed to them, spurring them on to duty, are all perfectly harmonious with the doctrine of a certain and infallible connexion between the beginning, and perfection of grace in their hearts. But their views of the doctrine, are totally irreconcileable with those promises in the covenants of redemption, and of grace, which provide for the *perpetuity of holiness* in the hearts of believers. Their views of the doctrine may be reconciled with the promises of eternal life, made to those who are faithful to the death; but they cannot be reconciled with those promises, which engage that grace, which shall insure this faithfulness unto death. All the promises in God's word, which belong to this class, (and there are many such,) do not harmonize with their scheme of doctrine. But the other class of promises, is not at all at variance with the scheme which we advocate. Our views of this particular article of christian doctrine, are now before the reader. Let him compare what he has read with the standard, and then judge.

* 1 Pet. i. 5.

SECTION VI.

REMARKS ON SATAN'S TRANSFORMATION INTO AN ANGEL OF LIGHT, AND ALSO ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF HIS MINISTERS INTO THE APOSTLES OF CHRIST; BEING MADE IN VIEW OF WHAT IS FOUND ON THESE SUBJECTS IN MR. BANGS' SIXTH LETTER.

TO the five Sermons occasioned by the Debate were added three other Sermons, which were thought to be on important subjects. The first of these was "on the duty of all men to be holy like God." This sermon was founded upon Levit. xix. 2 —*Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy.* The second of these sermons was, "on the difference of character between the unconverted and converted, as consisting in *supreme regard to self*, and *supreme regard to God.*" The text of this sermon was 2 Cor. v. 15.—*And he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.* The last of these three sermons was "on the subject of Satan's transformation into an angel of light." The text was 2 Cor. xi. 14.—*And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.*

On the first of these sermons, I do not discover that Mr. Bangs has made any remarks. In his last Letter he makes some remarks on the two last sermons. He takes the first notice of the last sermon, namely, the one which treats of Satan's transformation into an angel

of light. To this therefore we shall now pay the first attention.

I have long been convinced that we do not pay proper attention to the cautions, which God has mercifully given us, to be on our guard against the *wiles* of the devil. What a caution is this; "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist steadfast in the faith." 1 Pet. v. 8, 9. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to a certain duty, adding this as a motive, "Lest Satan get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his *devices*." In the 12th chapter of Revelation, Satan is described as one *which deceiveth the whole world*. And the effect of his being bound, is, *that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled*. Those who are entangled with error are spoken of as in the snare of the devil.—"In meekness instructing them that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of *the snare of the devil*." How forcible is the exhortation of the apostle, Eph. vi. 11, "Put on the *whole armor of God*, that ye may be able to stand against the *wiles* of the devil."

As to the sarcastic remarks, which are contained in this, and indeed in all the Letters, I have nothing to do with them. I have no personal quarrel with my antagonist. If he views *me* as one of the ministers of Satan, it is his duty to warn his fellow men against being deceived by me. If he views *all Calvinistic* ministers, as the ministers of Satan, he will no doubt act consistently with his belief, in exposing them, with a view to prevent their destroying the souls of men. Whether the sermon on Satan's being transformed into an angel of light, was an attempt "to slander the ministers of Christ," by "secret stabs under the garb of friendship," will be seen when the secrets of all hearts are disclosed. If it should appear, that in compassion for their souls a faithful warning had been given them, and they have turned a deaf ear to it, their blood will be upon their own heads.

No one will pretend but that Satan has his ministers, who are transformed into the ministers of Christ. And I think it will not be judged as foreign from my subject,

that my hearers, in being warned against satanic wiles, were warned against his ministers. Some rules were laid down, by which to know his ministers. But previously to these rules being given, it was observed: "No rules can be laid down, by which the hearers can, with certainty, distinguish between a *sanctified*, and an *unsanctified* minister." Sermons, p. 195. Mr. B. thinks there is a great contradiction between this observation, and my proceeding to lay down rules, by which to distinguish Satan's ministers. On this I would remark, 1. That an *unsanctified* minister and a minister of Satan, may not be precisely the same. Judas had a *devil*; and yet he was not properly the *devil's minister*. He was called and commissioned by Christ; he cast out devils in Christ's name, and preached his doctrine. Perhaps no one, who preaches the doctrines of truth, and who is regularly introduced into the ministry, is, in the most proper sense, a minister of Satan. If he be an unconverted man, he is in the sight of God a servant of the devil; but his open and visible character, may be that of a minister of Christ. And even if we could know, that his heart was not with Christ; yet if he preached the very preaching which Christ bids his ministers preach, it might not be proper to say, that he was one of the devil's preachers or ministers. To say so, would seem to carry the idea, that he preached on the same side which the devil would have him. Paul, in his epistle to the Philippians, speaks of some who preached Christ from bad motives, and yet tells us that he rejoiced, that even by their means Christ was preached. It appears from this, that he did not really consider them as the ministers of Satan, so as to warn the churches against them; as he did against those heretical teachers, whose word did eat like a canker: and yet he most pointedly condemned their character, because their motive was not good. It would seem that *corruption in doctrine*, and such corruption as is quite fundamental, is an essential ingredient in the character of a minister of the prince of darkness. To this however we add, that a *wicked life* is a *practical heresy*, and such as to stamp a public teacher with the peculiar mark of the kingdom to which he belongs.

What we have been observing, is not designed to represent a change of heart, as an unessential qualification in the gospel minister. For particular reasons, Christ saw fit to put one unconverted character among the twelve apostles; but it is undoubtedly the duty of every church, to seek a pastor after God's own heart. And it is the duty of those who are in the ministry, to commit this office and work to those only, who appear to be *faithful* men. I proceed to remark, 2. That if an unsanctified minister is the *same*, as a minister of Satan; rules may be given which are of use to guard us against being imposed on; and yet it is true, that "no rules can be laid down, by which the hearers can *with certainty* distinguish between a sanctified, and an unsanctified minister." There is a difference between laying down rules to judge of *our own* hearts, and to judge of the hearts of *our fellow men*. There are rules by which we may know, with certainty, about our own hearts. A christian may have an assured hope about himself. He may make his own calling and election *sure*; but he cannot, by any rules laid down, have the same assurance of his christian brother, for he cannot see and know his heart. The rules of judging of the goodness of another's heart, amount only to probability. There may be such striking evidences of grace exhibited, as to take away all uncomfortable doubts and suspicions of the genuineness of his religion; and yet it would be invading the prerogative of the searcher of hearts, to say, *We know* that man's heart is right. We can say, He is a faithful brother *as I suppose*. See 1 Pet. v. 12.

But when it was said, "No rules can be laid down by which the hearer can with certainty distinguish between a sanctified, and an unsanctified minister," it was not meant there were *no* unsanctified ministers which could be distinguished and pointed out as such. *Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment.* A good heart will never take corrupt doctrines, and a wicked life, for a mask; but a wicked heart sometimes plays the hypocrite. Men may conduct so, that we may *perceive* that they are in the gall of bitterness. Thus, if a man habitually use profane language, we decide with certainty; that if he be a professor, his religion *is vain*: But if he use no such language, and even regularly at-

tend religious duties, we dare not decide with the same certainty, that his religion is *not vain*. It was my object in the Sermon, to law down rules how to know those ministers, who were on the wrong side, and were in reality destroying, instead of building up, the christian faith; rather that to enable us to pronounce positively concerning any one, that he was a sanctified minister. To know those, who under the name of Christ's ministers, are opposing Christ, and whose word is eating like a canker, is a matter which deeply concerns all, who have souls capable of being saved or lost. But to be able to determine concerning the best minister of our acquaintance, that he is *already a child of God*, is not a matter of consequence.

As to the Methodist ministers, I am not disposed to impeach their moral character. All the charge which I shall bring against them, is what they will not deny: —I charge them with espousing, and propagating the *Arminian doctrines*; or the doctrines which are held forth in Mr. B's. Letters. In *their* view, I know that this is no fault; but in *our* view, it is one of no small magnitude. The things, which Mr. B has said in favor of their ministers, will not prove with certainty, that they are not the ministers of Satan transformed into the apostles of Christ. Their zeal to make converts, will not prove it. We know who it was that said, "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves." Mat. xxiii. 15. This passage is introduced merely to show it is possible, that a fire which is not kindled from the altar of God, should burn with vehement flame. We see from the case stated by our Saviour, (who knew what was in man,) that men who have never drunk into the spirit of his gospel, but are perfect strangers to it, may nevertheless be zealous in religion, and in spreading it abroad, and in making converts to it.

Ministers' having but a small temporal support, and their preaching against other ministers' receiving wages for their labor, does not prove that they are not in the service of the prince of darkness. To enter the gospel ministry, for the sake of the temporal support connect-

ed with it, is a great sin. To glorify God, and be useful to men, should be the ultimate end. No one should seek to enter the ministry, unless he thinks it to be the work for which he is, or for which he can be qualified; unless he has reason to think that it is the work to which God, by his providence and grace, is calling him. I am far from wishing to see the ministers of the Lord Jesus made affluent by their salaries, and converted into "lords spiritual," and even "lords temporal." But the opposite extreme of this lordly affluence is, that they shall have nothing. Who can help but see, that the matter is established by divine authority, That the ministers of the gospel shall have a temporal support? In the 9th chapter of the 1st Corinthians, the apostle argues this matter at full length. He reasons from a divine establishment, for the temporal support of the priests and Levites under the law. After he had used this and other arguments, he adds; "Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

The apostle, in his 2nd epistle to the Corinthians, says; "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service —— and in all things have I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so will I keep myself. —— Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth. But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion, that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." 2 Cor. xi. 8—14. From this passage we learn, that Satan's ministers made their boast of preaching the gospel for nothing, that is, without receiving wages; and that this is the thing which St. Paul has most directly under his eye, when he calls them false apostles and deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And their preaching against ministers' receiving wages, and stigmatizing the true ministers of Christ for doing so, is given by the apostle as the reason, why he was determined to take no wages of the church at Corinth, and of other churches in the regions of Achaia.

But as there are none at the present day, who pretend to balance the claims of these false apostles, against the claim of the great apostle of the Gentiles, which he made for himself and all the true ministers of the gospel, namely, that they had a right to a support from the carnal things of those, to whom they ministered in spiritual things; we should not imagine there would now be any call for ministers of the gospel, to decline receiving that support, which the Lord has ordained they shall be entitled to, for the sake of cutting off occasion from them which desire occasion. At least, I think, it must be manifest to all; that decrying salaries, and even preaching without any wages, is not, of itself, enough to rescue any one from the just imputation of being called a minister of Satan. The *receiving of a* salary, will not prove us to be Satan's ministers, and the not receiving of a salary, will not prove that we are not his ministers.*

* Mr. Bangs, in his concluding remarks, has this sentence: "Did we refuse to preach, until the people had stipulated to give us three, five, ten, or twenty hundred dollars annually, there might be some cause to suspect we were actuated by sinister motives, and that our ministry was founded in *selfishness*." pp. 294, 295. The Methodist minister receives a *salary*, how much I do not know: but I conclude that it is enough, together with the hospitality of those among whom he travels, to render him comfortable. If it be not enough, he surely ought to have more. The writer of this Vindication, is far from being chargeable with being a rich and affluent minister, as is well known to those who are acquainted with his circumstances.—His people are punctual in affording him his stipulated support; but he is not by this means rising to affluence. The ministers in the ecclesiastical body, of which he is a member, are not rich;—they are certainly not more than comfortable. This remark, without much alteration, it is thought will apply to the Congregational and Presbyterian ministers collectively, in this country. These things are not said in way of complaint; but as a reply to the insinuation, that we are *hirelings*, because we receive such extravagant salaries. We will not however, say, there is no fault in this thing. But this we are bold to say; That the chief Shepherd has ordained,—*that his ministers should receive a temporal support for their spiritual services.* 'Grant this,' some man may say, 'but why do you not relinquish *your right*, as Paul did *his*?' Ans. There may be instances at the present day, where there is a call for this; but to suppose the call to the relinquishment of this right, to be

The making of converts, is not decisive proof, that any preacher is not in the service of the devil. We must examine into the character of those converts; into their views of divine truth, their spirit, and their practice. *Ann Lee*, whom the Shakers call the Elect Lady, made converts; and there seems to be a great plainness, and uniformity in their dress; and regularity, and apparent self-denial in their conduct: But are we therefore bound, without examining into their views of *God's* character, and *their own;* and without becoming acquainted with their spirit and temper, to conclude that they are *real* converts, and that their founder was a true prophetess, sent by the Lord Jesus to preach his gospel?

Soundness in doctrine is essential to the ministers of Christ. It is an apostolic command; "If there come any unto you, and bring not this *doctrine*, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." 2 John verse 10. We will not at present, say what doctrine the apostle meant; let it suffice, that the text proves that a preacher may be so deficient in *doctrine*, as to lay a foundation for considering him as no minister of Christ, let his other claims be what they may. How forcibly is this idea expressed by the apostle Paul, Gal. i. 8: "But tho' we, or *an angel from heaven*, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Did not the apostle, in this declaration, make *orthodoxy* essential to the character of a gospel minister? Did he not do as much as to say; that a man cannot have so much sanctity in his deportment, or zeal in his preaching, as to claim to be heard, in the character of a gospel minister, if he do not preach the true gospel?

I have no doubt but that the preachers, who are in the Methodist connexion, think they are preaching the true gospel of Christ. We do not wish to have dominion over their faith. But what we believe, that we must speak. If we believe, as we most assuredly do, that it is a doctrine of revelation, that the all-wise God

universal, would be the same as to suppose a want of wisdom in the Lord's ordaining, *that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel.*

had from eternity a perfect plan, concerning the whole work of creation and providence, including every creature which should be made, and every event which should come to pass; and that this is that counsel of his will, according to which he worketh all things, and especially the calling and sanctification of that church, which was chosen in Christ before the foundation of world;—if we not only believe this to be true, but a glorious truth, which is interwoven with the whole system of christian doctrine; can we, consistently with this belief, think him to be a safe guide to souls, who says; 'If a man had set himself to work on purpose to blacken the character of God, by the most vile misrepresentations, he could not have done it more effectually than it has been done in sermons, which were written in favor of Divine Decrees, and of Personal Election?' If we believe, as we certainly do, the total depravity of every unrenewed heart,—and that every such heart is that carnal mind, which the scripture declares is enmity against God; it must appear to us no small error, to teach, that unrenewed men have much good in their hearts, and that they increase in goodness before they are born of the Spirit. If we believe, as we certainly do, that the best saints on earth are sinfully imperfect, and that an increase of grace makes this indwelling sin more apparent to those, who know their own hearts, as well as more loathsome; we cannot think it harmless to teach, that some have arrived to such a state of perfection, that there is no sin which dwelleth in them. If we believe, as we most assuredly do, that the covenant of grace is an everlasting covenant, confirmed in Christ with every believer, and ordered in all things and sure, so that, according to our views, it would be just as inconsistent, for the believer to be lost, as for Christ to fail, and lose his acceptableness before the mercy seat; it is not strange that we consider that a heresy, in which the immutability of this covenant is not only denied, but branded as a corrupt and pernicious doctrine.

Let us for a moment suppose, that when Jesus Christ said, *All the Father giveth me shall come to me*, he actually meant what Calvinists believe he meant, namely, that some of the fallen race, even a precise

number, were given to him, as the reward of his sufferings, and that all this number will through grace come to him, and be saved: And in connexion with this, let us suppose, that one of the professed teachers of his religion, should say, This is "one of the most shocking ideas which can enter into the heart of man;" —would Christ own such a man, as one of his ministers? Suppose it to be actually true, that the scriptures do teach, that God forms the characters of his creatures, as much as the potter forms his vessels:— Let us suppose that this is the very thing which the apostle, with so much solemnity, designs to teach us in the ninth chapter of Romans;—and what must we think of that christian teacher, who continually asserts, that if this be true, man is no more of a moral agent than the pen with which he writes, or the ships driven by fierce winds? Let us suppose, that when the apostle said, *They that are in the flesh cannot please God*, he meant to teach, that all sinners up to the moment of regeneration had not a spark of moral goodness in them, or any thing which could please a holy God; and must not the apostle have been grieved, if he had heard christian ministers say, that sinners gradually become good before they are regenerated—that before they are regenerated they repent of their sins, even with that repentance which needeth not to be repented of? Let us suppose that when the good Shepherd said, *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand;* that he actually meant to teach the impossibility of their losing their union to him; and what would he say to that minister of his, who taught that this union could be dissolved, and that it was much safer to preach that it could, than that it could not be dissolved? Let us suppose, that the Bible does in reality teach us, that if any man thinks he is pure from all sin, it proves him perverse,—what must we think of those who say that they are thus pure? Now, whether these doctrines, which the Arminians with so much zeal contend against, are contained in the Bible or not, this is certain, that we as much believe they are contained there, as we believe that we have a Bible; of

course, the Arminian must appear to us erroneous; and as he opposes what we deem to be *fundamental doctrines*, his errors must appear to us, not like errors about meats and drinks, modes and forms, but *fundamental errors*; such errors as strike at the root of religion, and such therefore as must be very dangerous in their tendency.*

Mr. B. in behalf of the Methodists, disclaims their making dependence on dreams, smells, visionary appearances, applications of particular texts of scripture, &c. as evidence of conversion. If they do not make dependence on these things, we rejoice in it. In the course of my parochial and missionary labors, I have found a considerable number of those conversions, which may be termed of the visionary class. Having once, in my youth, made dependence on such things myself; and being most effectually convinced of their fallacy, and ruinous effect, I have felt it to be a duty incumbent on me, to warn my fellow sinners against these deceitful works of the devil. To do this, was the particular object in view, in selecting the text of the 8th sermon; which I first preached among my

* The doctrines which are now called *Arminian*, and which are advocated by the Methodists, appear to be substantially the same, with those which were advanced by *Pelagius*, in the beginning of the 5th century. He appeared to deny the original depravity of infants, and the total depravity of the unregenerate. He held to the independence and *self determining* power of the will, and of course, denied the necessity of divine grace, directly to incline the will to that which is good; and, of course, excluded predestination, except what is founded on the foreknowledge of men's faith and obedience. He also held to a sinless perfection in this life. [See Milner's Church Hist. Vol. 2.] These sentiments were then considered by Augustine, and by the Church in general, not only as errors, but as very fundamental errors, such as greatly tended to destroy the grace of God in our salvation. The sentiments now termed *Calvinism*, and *Arminianism*, have been all along the two leading systems of doctrine, which have stood opposed to each other. If one is true, the other is false; and the one which is false, must needs be a great falsehood in doctrine, because it takes the lead in opposing the truth; and other errors seem to come in only as auxiliaries of this leading error. Which it is that we deem to be the true system, is known. But let every one search the scriptures for himself.

own people, without any expectation of its ever being published. To warn them against such delusions, was thought to be both needful and safe. I did not think such mistaken notions of conversion were, by any means, confined to our own communion; or that they were more common among us than among others. If I may be the means of undeceiving the deceived, which are found in other communions, I hope it will not be considered as acting an unfriendly part towards them. I have not now time to repeat the things which are contained in the sermon, on the subject of false conversions; but I would request the reader most carefully and prayerfully to attend to the things which are there suggested, if he can get access to the sermon. If he should consider the *doctrinal* sermons in that volume, as dangerous; he will not perhaps consider it as dangerous, to hear what can be suggested concerning the variety of ways in which we may be deceived with a vain hope. A *vain* hope——————how dreadful the thought!

It is objected by Mr. B. that I have represented Satan as transforming himself into an angel of *love*, and that I have said, he can counterfeit love as well as other graces. He then adds, as a refutation of this sentiment, "Does not St. John say, *God is love; and they that dwell in love dwell in God, and God in them?* Is not love therefore one of the brightest traits of the divine image? And if Satan can counterfeit love, I see no reason why he may not counterfeit holiness also." p. 266. I answer, he can *counterfeit* holiness, for holiness is love. It seems strange, that Mr. B. should have read this sermon, and not have learnt what was meant by Satan's *transformation*; and by Satan's *counterfeiting good things*. By his transformation into a benevolent creature, or angel of love, the apostle did not surely mean, that the devil had become a good being; that he was actually changed back into an angel of light. But if he meant any thing, he must have meant, that he did assume this good character for this end, that he might the more successfully deceive and destroy the souls of men. And when we said, that Satan could counterfeit love, did we say that he could *produce love*, the same love, which is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy

Ghost? What is meant by *counterfeiting* a thing? Does it mean making the very thing, which is valuable? or does it not rather mean, that we make something which has no real value, in imitation of that which has value, with a view to deceive the incautious? When silver and gold are counterfeited, base metals are taken, which resemble silver and gold, and they are glossed over and stamped as though they were true coin. When Bank notes are counterfeited, some dishonest knave puts to the note, resembling the true bills, the names of the officers, and then seeks to put it off, as if it were, in reality, a note issued by the Bank. If I should say, There is no bill but what knaves can *counterfeit*, it would not be saying that there was not a difference, and to good judges a *perceivable* difference, between the counterfeit and the true bills, even in every instance. But our saying, that every bill can be counterfeited, if it should be believed, would make people examine all the money which they take. Now let us suppose; that it should be given out, and be universally believed, that there was a particular bill, (we will say a twenty dollar note,) which nobody could imitate or counterfeit, would it not have a tendency to make us take all notes of this sort, without the least examination concerning their genuineness? Let this be applied to the case before us. If this should be a generally received sentiment in Christendom, that Satan cannot counterfeit *love*, then whenever we feel *any love* in our hearts, we shall, without examining into its nature, immediately conclude that we are born of God. And this sentiment will give our adversary great advantage; for it is evident, that all the affectionate and loving feelings of our hearts, are no more holy love, than all our sorrow, is godly sorrow; or than all our gladness, is holy joy and thankfulness. If men will still believe, that Satan cannot counterfeit love, they will give a most amazing advantage to him who walketh about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour; and who to effect this, transforms himself into an angel of light.

On the subject of the wiles of the devil, in deceiving us with religious experiences, which are radically defective, and which, of consequence, are not supported by the word of God, I would intreat my reader to con-

sult, in addition to the sacred volume itself, Edwards on *the Affections*, if he has not done it already. There is so much light reflected by this book, on the interesting subject of *experimental religion*, that there can be but few books, besides the Bible, more worthy of our attention. Especially is it worthy of the careful attention of of all those who watch for souls. I have thought that no spiritual guide, who lives where he can have access to this book, could hardly be innocent, in not availing himself of this excellent help, to aid him in his work of guiding souls in the path of life. Edwards had great acquaintance with the Bible, with his own heart, and with men. He was greatly experienced in religious awakenings. He most fully believed in such a thing, as seasons of the special out-pouring of the Spirit; and did all he could to promote such a good work. Among the means to promote it, he took great pains to observe and note the distinction between a genuine work of the Spirit of God, and all the counterfeit works of the prince of darkness. His book on Religious Affections, appears to be the result of all his studies on this subject, and of all the observations which he had opportunity to make, by means of extensive acquaintance with the religious revivals and awakenings, which were then in the land. In compassion to immortal souls, which are so exposed to be lost, by means of false, delusive experiences, we would entreat spiritnal guides of every communion, to search thoroughly into this subject, lest they should heal spiritual wounds slightly, and speak peace to them to whom God has not spoken peace.

SECTION VII.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT, DESIGNED TO EXPOSE WHAT WE DEEM TO BE DANGEROUS SENTIMENTS ON THIS SUBJECT; WHICH ARE FOUND IN MR. BANGS' SIXTH LETTER; AS ALSO IN THE BOOK OF METHODIST DOCTRINES AND DISCIPLINE.

The author of the Letters complains, that in the sermon on Satan's transformation, I have dealt in *negative* marks, without giving positive signs of a genuine conversion. "It is true," says our author," you say it may be known to God, and to the person himself; but you give no mark by which it may be known, otherwise than by saying, 'Regeneration is a real change of heart from *sin* to *holiness*.' But holiness is a very vague term, and needs much explanation to understand it." p. 265. I acknowledge that this objection would have had weight in it, if that sermon had been published by itself; but it immediately followed a sermon, the express object of which was to point out *the difference of character between the unconverted and the converted, as consisting in supreme regart to self and supreme regard to God.* To this sermon the reader was referred, for the distinguishing marks of a genuine conversion. And whether these marks were *scriptural* in the view of the reader, or not, he could not say that they were not *explicit*.

After complaining of *my* deficiency, our author proceeds to give *his* views of the evidences of a genuine conversion. He states, that the true convert has a

three-fold testimony, that he is an heir of God; "1. The *direct* witness of the Spirit, which bears witness with his spirit that he is born of God.—2. Its indirect witness which are its fruits.—3. His external deportment, called keeping the commandments, which perfectly corresponds to the internal dispositions of the heart." p. 268. The two last of these testimonies appear intelligible. By the connexion he makes it evident, that by the *fruits* of the Spirit, which he calls its *indirect* witness, he intended religion in the heart. But what did he intend by the *direct* witness of the Spirit? I do not see that he has told us, or given us any clue, by which we shall find out what he intended: and yet he seems to make this the most material witness; for he not only places it first in order, but he says, concerning the indirect witness, namely, the fruits of the Spirit, that it "cannot exist where the *direct* evidence is wanting, no more than there can be fruit on a tree destitute of life." What then can be meant by this direct witness of the Spirit? Does it mean regeneration itself? This we should be led to conclude from the description just given of it. But surely this could not be the idea of our author, because he is teaching us how to know that we are regenerated. By the direct witness of the Spirit, he does not mean the love of God, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost; nor any other holy affection of the heart, produced by the Spirit; for all these he refers to the second class of testimony, which he calls the *indirect* witness. I see not then, but that it must mean a direct revelation, made by the Spirit to a certain person, declaring to him, that he is an heir of God; just as if a visible messenger should be sent from God, to make this declaration, without exhibiting any other proof of it, than that God said it was so.

Here I would ask, how it is that the Spitit makes this revelation to any man, that he is an heir of God? Does he make use of any *words*, in bearing this direct witness? If he does, are they the words which have been already revealed, and which are contained in the scriptures; or are the *words* new, as well as the thing revealed? If they are the words of scripture, how shall I know that they belong to me in particular? I know that the *commands* of the scripture belong to me, be-

cause I am one of the rational creatures of the supreme Lord. But how shall I know that the *promises* belong to me, short of my possessing the character to which they are made? For example; the promise of forgiveness is made to the *penitent*: how shall I know that my sins are forgiven, unless I have evidence that I am a penitent? If this promise, *Thy sins are forgiven thee*, should seem to be sounded in my ears; would it be any proof that *my* sins were forgiven? Would not this be what my antagonist disclaims, viz. the placing of the evidence of conversion, on the application of particular texts of scripture?

Does the Spirit then reveal this fact; that I am an heir of God, in *new* words, not taken from the book of revealed truth? But how shall I know, that it is *the Spirit of God*, who makes this revelation to me; who thus directly tells me, that I am in favor with God? The command is, *Believe not every spirit; but try the spirits whether they are of God.* Is there any discriminating mark, by which an anxious mind may know how to distinguish the direct witness of the Spirit, from the deceitful workings of the grand adversary, the spirit which worketh in the children of disobedience?

Does the Spirit bear witness with the spirit of the child of God, that he is a subject of the new birth, *without* the use of words, either new, or taken from scripture; and what kind of a witness is this? It is not that which results from exercises of the new heart, for this, according to the system of Mr. B. would fall under the *indirect* witness of the Spirit. It must then be an unaccountable impression made upon the mind, declaring, without words, and without the divine nature imparted, that I am a child of God And is there no danger that the enemy will counterfeit this impression? If he should, how shall I distinguish between the impression which is from the Spirit of God, and that which is from the spirit of delusion? Does the scripture any where mark the difference? If the impression which is from the Spirit of God, be not known by its *holiness*, (and it cannot be, according to Mr. B's scheme,) by what mark is it to be made known? This is a matter which so nearly concerns every one of us, that it is of infinite importance, that we should be taught how to

distinguish this *direct* witness of the Spirit from all delusions. The glory of God, as well as our own safety, is greatly concerned in our being furnished with discriminating marks, by which to distinguish his infallible testimony from the subtle wiles of the devil.

If it should be said by my antagonist, 'The same objection lies against your own scheme, for you have said that Satan can counterfeit every grace of the Spirit, not excepting even *love* itself;' I answer, Tho' I have said that Satan can *counterfeit* every christian grace, and love among the rest; yet I have shewn the difference between the *real*, and the *counterfeit* graces. I have shown, that supreme regard to self, is the ground work of all that love, repentance, faith, submission, joy, zeal, &c. which exist in natural men; while supreme regard to God, and unfeigned delight in holiness, lie at the bottom of all the true graces of the Spirit, and of all evangelical obedience. However difficult, through the deceitfulness of the heart, it may be to detect a false hope, yet it is not through any deficiency in the rules laid down, by which to distinguish a false, from a true hope. The difference between a supreme regard to one's own self, and a supreme regard to the glory of God and the good of his kingdom, is as great a difference of character as can possibly exist. The one is the least object, which any creature can seek, and the other is the greatest, which any created being, or even God himself can seek.

The distinction which Mr. B. has made between the *witness*, and the *fruit* of the Spirit; or between the *direct* and *indirect* witness, we find in the writings of Mr. Wesley, and they are contained in the book of Methodist Doctrines and Discipline. In this book it is stated, that by the direct witness of the Spirit we may know that we are justified, and perfectly sanctified, and that we shall never finally fall away. According to this book, as far as we are able to understand it, this direct witness of the Spirit *precedes* the existence of the *fruits* of the Spirit in the heart of the believer, and is the cause of all his love to Christ. Thus it is written in this book, p. 76, "Our knowing ourselves justified by faith is the cause of our love to Christ, as appears from these scriptures, *Herein is love, not that we loved God,*

but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. We love him because he first loved us." Further on it is said, "There is a necessity of knowing his love, who first loved us, without which we cannot love him again." We are not here told how we can know that we are justified, previous to our exercising love to Christ. I know it is said, that we are before this justified by *faith*: but I cannot see how this faith can be any evidence of a justified state, so long as there is no love to Christ included in it. A faith which has no love in it, may be possessed by graceless men, and even by devils. Therefore we conclude, that this knowledge of our justified state, which precedes our love to God and Christ, must be derived from what they call the *direct witness* of the Spirit. And this direct witness of the Spirit, if we understand them, is, as it were, an immediate message from heaven, revealing to a certain man, or woman, his or her acceptance with God, while as yet there is no love in the heart; but that upon this revelation being made, love immediately flows forth in return for the favor received.

And now, my dear reader, is this the truth of God? is this the experimental religion which makes us new creatures, and which fits us for the kingdom of heaven? If this be truth, God forbid that I should oppose it; but if it is an error, ruinous to souls, would to God that I might be enabled effectually to expose and destroy it! The idea, That we cannot love Christ until we *know* ourselves to be in a justified state, and that this knowledge is the very cause of our love to him, to me appears one of the most false and dangerous sentiments which can be advanced. It seems to be wholly founded on the principle, That it is right for every man to make himself the ultimate end of all his affections and pursuits;—that it is right for him to love himself more than God. The idea supposes; that there is nothing in Christ to draw forth our love until we know that we are justified and pardoned. Now, if the sinner can be pardoned and justified, and have the witness of the Spirit, before he has any love to Christ, what will hinder his loving Christ, even with his sinful, selfish heart? for Christ himself has said, *Sinners also love those that*

love them. It is an inspired proverb, *A gift in secret pacifieth anger; and a reward in the bosom, strong wrath.* According to the scripture testimony, sinners hate God. Awakened and convinced sinners see, and know that they hate God. But if, according to the scheme of our opponents, God can send them first the direct witness of the Spirit, to assure them of their justified state, will not this, like a gift in secret, pacify their anger, and like a reward in their bosom, will it not allay their strong wrath and soften down their bitter enmity? Saul, with all his rooted enmity against David, felt emotions of love towards him, once and again, while he saw that David had spared his life, when he could easily have taken it away. Now such a love as this can be exercised towards *God*, as well as towards our fellow men. The whole congregation of the children of Israel were much affected with the goodness of the Lord, in delivering them from the hand of Pharaoh: *They sang his praise, but they soon forgat his works.* When Christ fed the five thousand with five loaves, they appeared to have a great love to him, and were about to take him by force and make him a king; but he told them, that they sought him *because they did eat of the loaves and were filled.* This was as much as to tell them, that their love to him *originated* wholly from the favors which they had received, and which they expected to receive from him.

But it will be said, Does not the apostle John represent God's love towards us, as being before our love to him; and does he not say, "We love him *because* he first loved us?" The apostle John, and all the other apostles and inspired writers teach us, that our salvation, from first to last, is the fruit of the most gracious and unbounded love of God. As Christ designed to keep down the pride of his disciples, when he said; "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you:" so the beloved disciple designed to teach, that we should never have loved God, if he had not *first loved us*, not with the love of delight, but with a benevolent pity; and had he not sent his son to die for us, and his Spirit to renew our hearts to the exercise of holy love to him.

self. Holy love in us is caused by his power, and is wholly the fruit of his grace.

It is also true, that the *objective ground*, or cause of our love to God, is the excellence of his character; which excellence is most clearly manifested in the gift of his Son to die for our apostate world. It is also true, that I may exercise a holy gratitude to God, for a favor bestowed on me in particular; but to lay the foundation for such gratitude, I must love God independently of this favor bestowed. If this favor bestowed on *me*, and because it is bestowed on me in distinction from another, be the first exciting cause, and if it lie at the foundation of my love to God, it is not the excellence of his character which I love: indeed it is not *God* which I love, but *myself*. *Every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts.*

The reason why we are required to exercise the love of complacence towards the God of Israel, is, that he is the *true God*; the great Lord of heaven and earth, whose understanding is infinite, and whose heart is perfectly benevolent. He has manifested his character to us, that we may love, trust in, and obey him. He tells us what he has made, and what he has done, as a display of his greatness and goodness. He reveals his law, and he reveals the gospel of his grace. The Lord is known by the judgments which he executes, and by the rich displays of his mercy. When he would draw forth the approbation, and complacence of his creatures, he pourtrays before them all these varied manifestations of his power and holiness. In view of the whole character which he has displayed, in all his works, and in all his word, he requires their love. And tho' the carnal heart is enmity against God, yet when it is renewed after the divine image, it goes forth in love to this great and fearful name, "THE LORD OUR GOD." The same character, which had always been displayed before the mind, and hated, is now loved, and that for its own divine excellence. The thing, which makes the Divine Being appear excellent and altogether desirable to the new born soul, is not a belief, that he is now a *reconciled* God to *him*; but that he is a *great* and a *holy* God. His own safe state has not

been thought of; nor indeed can he know that his state is safe, until he first has evidence, that he is reconciled to God, and that he loves him for his glorious holiness, and all his moral perfection.

The reader will see our views of this matter, illustrated in the following paragraph in the Life of President Edwards, when he speaks of his first religious comforts: "The first that I remember that I ever found any thing of that sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine things, that I have lived much in since, was on reading these words, 1 Tim. i. 17. *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever, and ever, Amen.* As I read these words there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from any thing I ever experienced before. Never any words of scripture seemed to me as these words did. I thought with myself, how excellent a Being that was, and how happy I should be if I might enjoy that God, and be wrapt up to God in heaven, and be as it were swallowed up in him. I kept saying, and as it were singing over these words of scripture to myself; and went to prayer, to pray to God that I might enjoy him; and prayed in a manner quite different from what I used to do, with a new sort of affection. But it never came into my thought, that there was any thing spiritual, or of a saving nature in this." In this experience, it is worthy of notice, that the *glory* which was discovered in the Divine Being, was the thing which drew forth love to this Being. It is also worthy of notice, that this love was exercised towards God, while it was not known, nor thought of, that he had become a reconciled God to him, who exercised the love.

Does not the above experience accord with the account, which the apostle gives of a saving work of the Spirit, 2 Cor. iv. 6. *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.* The immediate effect of a gracious renovation of heart, is, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God: and as the glory of God is

more wonderfully displayed in the work of redemption, than in his other works, this glory is, in a pre-eminent sense, seen in the face of Jesus Christ. If the true God, in his true character, is seen to be glorious in being such a God as he is, and if he is delighted in, on account of his being such a God; it is certain, that God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into the heart, to give the knowledge of this glory; for the carnal mind is enmity against God, and never can delight in him on account of his being such a God as he is.

As I have endeavored to show how unfounded, and how dangerous the sentiment is, which is entertained by our antagonists, concerning the direct witness of the Spirit, it may now be proper to show what *we* understand by the witness of the Spirit. Let it be clearly understood, that we believe the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the only standard of religious truth, and a sufficient guide for us, so long as we continue in this world. By this standard are to be tried all doctrines, all feelings, and whatever relates to practice. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Psal. cxix. 105. The following text we consider as applicable to all who speak to us, whether by an audible voice to the ear, or by a secret whisper, or impression, to the mind: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isa. viii. 20. Therefore we make no dependence on any internal witness of the Spirit, which cannot be proved by the *word* to be a *true witness*. That which is contained in the Bible, is the *written witness* of the *Spirit*, since holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Here is the standing and unalterable testimony of the Spirit, with respect to the nature and effects of true religion, even that religion which God will approve. But my reading of this testimony of the Spirit, with an unrenewed heart, can give me no evidence that I am a child of God. On the contrary, it all stands against me, and testifies that I have no part nor lot in this matter. But when the Spirit condescends to write upon my heart the same religion, which he has reveal-

ed in the scriptures, this may be called his *living witness:* and it is known by *our Spirit*, that is, by our rational soul, to be *his witness*, and no delusion, by its agreement with his standing and unalterable testimony, which is given in the scripture of truth. Religion, as contained in the Bible, is something which is enjoined upon us, and its nature and effects are described; but religion when communicated to the heart by the Holy Spirit, is inward and outward obedience to these injunctions;—it is *feeling*, and *action*. It is, in fine, the actual existence of the thing *in life*, which is there only described *in words*.

By what has been said, it will now be seen, that we make no distinction between what our theological opponents call the *direct* and *indirect* witness of the Spirit; and we are persuaded that no such distinction ought to be made. By the *indirect* witness of the Spirit, they mean the new nature imparted by the Spirit's influence, viz. love, repentance, faith, and other christian graces. But this we conceive to be the *most direct* witness, which by scripture can be known, to be any witness at all. But why is this called the *witness* of the *Spirit?* It is so called, because this new nature, these new affections, are produced by the Spirit; and they are good evidence, that we are the children of God. The Spirit is said to bear witness *with our spirit*, because it is by the power of self reflection, that we come to be acquainted with the internal witness of the Spirit of God. A man has power to search his own heart, therefore he can be acquainted with the *witness*, or, which is the same, with the *fruits* of the Spirit that are within him.

In the same chapter, where the apostle speaks of the Spirit, he says, "As many as are *led* by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God."* Here, the being led by the Spirit, is proof of the same thing, as the witness of the Spirit, in the other passage. But how does the Spirit of God *lead* us? We know how one man leads another: but the Spirit of God does not lead exactly in

* Rom. viii. 14.

the same manner. He leads by *disposing* us to walk : He *draws* and we *run* after him ; and we know that we are led by him, when we find our own minds inclined to walk in right paths, even in the paths which the Spirit himself has marked out in the word.

In this same chapter, the Spirit itself is said to make intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered. But it is certain that the intercessions of the Spirit do not mean the same, as the intercessions made by Christ before the mercy seat. They evidently refer to those desires, which the Spirit excites in the hearts of the saints, when *they pray* in the Holy Ghost. Yet it is spoken of as if the Spirit personally, and separately from the saints themselves, made intercession for them, when those intercessions were to be found only in their own hearts. With the same propriety, the Spirit itself is said to bear witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, though it is in *our spirit* alone, that we are to look for this witness of the *Spirit of God ;* and this whether it be indeed the witness of the Spirit itself, is to be *tested* by his infallible witness in the *word*. And though this inward witness is to be looked for only in our hearts, yet it is proper to call it the witness of the Spirit, since no such thing would exist in our hearts, were it not for his gracious and special operations. Thus, " he that believeth hath the witness *in himself ;*" since it is upon the table of his own heart, that the Spirit of God writes it. The *sealing* of the Spirit, which is a scripture phrase, is of the same import as the *witness*, and the *leading* of the Spirit. In sealing, the Spirit impresses the image of God on the heart : and this image consists in love, and other holy affections. This is the seal by which the Lord knoweth them that are his ; and by which they know themselves to be his. This is the same as the water that Christ gives his people, which is in them a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

The subject concerning the witness of the Spirit, will be closed by two or three remarks, which, I hope, will not be deemed unimportant.

1. Very great injury may be done to the cause of truth, by overstraining the *figurative* language of scrip-

ture. By this means, the popish doctrine of *transubstantiation* was introduced. Because the Saviour called the bread and wine of the sacramental feast, his body and blood, the papists have made it essential to salvation, to believe that these symbols were the real body and blood of the Lord. This mere conversion of a figure of speech, into a literal expression, has brought on the most bloody persecutions, and been the means of the death of many of the true disciples of Jesus. But to destroy men's bodies is not so great an evil as to destroy their souls. And is not the error, which we have in this section, been endeavoring to detect, peculiarly calculated to destroy souls? And has not this error crept in, by a perversion of the figurative language of the apostle, in that noted text, Rom. viii. 16; *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God?* We know that when two men bear witness together, though they may be perfectly agreed, yet their testimony is distinct, the one from the other. With this manner of witnessing in view, our opponents think they have ground for their distinction between the direct, and indirect witness of the Spirit. They are looking for the Spirit to *speak*, and bear witness in some way, entirely distinct from his sanctifying operations on the heart; which last they consider as a kind of inferior testimony. Thus, by an overstraining of this allusion to a human witness, they are led to look for some other evidence of adoption, besides *the spirit of adoption*; and for some other evidence, that they belong to Christ, besides their having the *spirit of Christ*; and a life of conformity to him. By means of this misconception of the text referred to, do we not expose ourselves to be deceived by every spirit? Do we not, as it were, invite the enemy to deceive us?

2. Attention to this subject has led us to discover, (if we mistake not,) the cause why our opponents do not talk of false and delusive hopes, as taking place among their own people. It has been remarked by those, who had have great opportunity to hear the Methodist preachers, that they do not preach, as if there were any danger that their converts would be deceived by a false hope. And is not this defect in their preaching,

the fruit of their mistaken notions about the witness of the Spirit? Their converts all have the direct witness of the Spirit, which does not depend on any obedience of the heart or life; and this is the most material witness, without which, according to their doctrine, the other kinds of witness cannot exist. If any one declare that he has this witness, we do not see how we can reason with him concerning its genuineness, for it is nothing which is described in the word of God, or which can be defined by man: It is neither holiness in the heart, nor holiness in the life. If any of their converts utterly apostatize, even then there are no doubts entertained of the genuineness of their conversion.—They are all represented as having fallen from a state of real grace; none of them are considered, as even now making it manifest, that they took lamps without oil. And all this appears to us, to be the natural result of their mistake about the witness of the Spirit.

We hope these remarks will not be considered, as prompted by an unkind and contentious spirit. How could we say less, and clear our skirts of the blood of souls? We are not seeking to destroy our antagonists, but to save them. We hope they will candidly review this matter, and that if they become convinced, that their sentiments on this point are of a dangerous tendency, they will renounce them. If their *experimental* religion should prove to be essentially defective, how great will be the defect?

3. We would add another remark, which shall close the section: The remark is this; That if the *witness*, and the *fruits* of the Spirit, are the same, it is natural to expect, that the evidences of our justified state should increase, or diminish, according to the degrees of sanctification of which we partake. Hence the exhortation, "Give *diligence* to make your calling and election sure." The Spirit's *witness* in our favor, is in proportion to his gracious *work* on our hearts, for it is by this alone that he bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. In proportion therefore, as our hearts and lives are brought into a conformity to the attested and indubitable wit-

ness of the Spirit, in the written word, we have well grounded evidence, that we are born of God. By bringing forth much of the fruits of the Spirit, we not only glorify our heavenly Father, but make it evident that we are the disciples of Christ. In this, and in no other way, may we all seek to enjoy a full assurance of hope unto the end!

SECTION VIII.

A VINDICATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF DISINTERESTED LOVE OR BENEVOLENCE; BEING A REPLY TO OBJECTIONS MADE AGAINST THIS DOCTRINE BY MR. BANGS, IN HIS SIXTH LETTER.

IF the reader has become convinced, that the witness of the Spirit is to be looked for in the *holy change*, which takes place in the heart of the convert; he will naturally inquire, What is the nature of that change? what is there imparted which is new? To this inquiry we answer, *The love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost.* We also say, it is a love which may be known by this, that it is not *selfish*, but *disinterested.*

The first inference drawn from the seventh Sermon, in the volume which called forth Mr. B's animadversions, was this, That *selfishness*, and *disinterested love*, are the sources of *all the sin*, and of *all the holiness* in the universe. From the Letters before me, I find that my antagonist denies the very existence of that principle, which in the sermon was considered as the source of all the holiness in the universe, "Disinterested benevolence," says Mr. B. "is a phrase often used by Hopkinsian writers, and it sounds very pleasing to the ear, but is something to which man is a total stranger," p. 269. His principal objections against the doctrine

of *disinterested love* or *benevolence*, will now be noticed.

I. He objects, that it is inconsistent in the very nature of things, to be actuated by disinterested motives; since it supposes us to be *interested*, and *disinterested* at at the same time. "No man," says our author, "can be actuated by a principle that he does not possess.—And to be *disinterested*, is to have *no interest* in our welfare. But to have *no interest* in a thing, is to be wholly indifferent about it, that is, to have no concern about it. And can a man *act* from a principle in which he takes *no interest*, concerning which he is *entirely indifferent*, and which he *feels not to operate in his heart?*" p. 172. This objection is a mere play upon words. Our opponents must know, that we do not use the word *disinterested*, as being synonymous with *indifferent*.—The word *selfish* is pretty generally understood to convey a bad idea, an idea of something criminal; and it is common to use the word *interested*, as conveying the same idea with *selfish*. Thus we say, a man is governed by *interest*; or he is actuated by *interested motives*, when we mean that he is selfish. Now it is convenient to have some word to express the opposite of a selfish temper, and as the word *interested* is used to imply the same thing as *selfish*, it was not at all unnatural, that the word *disinterested* should come into use, as expressing the opposite of selfishness. When it is used in opposition to selfishness, it is evident that it cannot mean the same as *no interest*, but rather as pointing out another sort of interest, totally different from the interest sought by a selfish being. When Moses would not accept the offer of being made into a great nation himself, in distinction from the twelve tribes; but preferred to have his name blotted from God's book, rather than to see Israel destroyed, and their God dishonored, he seemed nobly to rise above selfish considerations. This we express by saying, that he manifested a *disinterested* spirit: but we would by no means be understood to say, that he felt indifferent about the glory of God, and the good of Israel, which was the interest or good, which he preferred to his own honor and prosperity. He did not feel *uninterested* in the glory of Jehovah, or in the good of his people. But

as this great interest drew his heart away from his selfish interest, or from that interest which a selfish heart would naturally prize, we describe this excellency by calling it *disinterestedness*.

It is said of Jesus Christ, that he pleased not *himself*; therefore we say that he was not selfish, he was not governed by *interested* motives, but was *disinterested* in all which he did, and suffered; and yet it is most manifest, that he took a most *lively interest* in that good which he sought, even the glory of God in the salvation of sinners. Of him it was written, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." Let our opponents then, once for all, understand, that by *disinterested affection* we do not mean apathy, or stoical indifference and stupidity: we do not mean the same as *no affection*; nor do we design to say, that the disinterested have any less interest in the object which *they* seek; than the selfish have in the object which *they* seek; but we mean to say; that the object itself is a different one, even so fundamentally different, that selfish creatures do not seek it at all; but are really opposed to it with all their heart.

II. It is objected, that the doctrine of a disinterested love, requires to annihilate ourself, or to hate ourself, whereas God has "commanded to love our neighbor only as we love ourselves;" and "the apostle saith, *For no man ever yet hated his own flesh.*" See p. 272. Let it be understood, that by disinterested love, we mean the moral opposite of selfishness. By selfishness is meant a supreme regard to one's self, not because this object is of such superlative worth in the intellectual system, but because it is *self*. In this sense self ought to be annihilated; that is, considered as the supreme good: but such an annihilation of self, would imply nothing more than reducing one's self to his own proper place in the system.

If a single atom were to take state to itself, and fly from the surface of the earth high into the firmament of heaven, and claim to be the center of the material system, and require suns and planets to revolve around it, as the acknowledged center of attraction;—this would resemble a rational creature who makes himself his supreme object, and who wishes the Creator

and all his creatures, to make his good *their* center of attraction. But had this little atom *no* place in the material system? Certainly it had. Its proper place was that of an atom, and it behoved it to cleave to the surface of the earth, and in connexion with all its kindred atoms, to attract, and be attracted; and statedly and orderly to revolve around the real center of the system. In like manner, every man has a place in the intellectual system. He is one among many millions in this world, and he has a right to count himself one. Therefore the command of the Creator enjoins, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.* The Creator, by this command, did not surely intend to balance the interests of all the human race, by the interests of one man;—he did not therefore mean to say, 'Love thyself as much as *all* thy fellow men:' but, 'Love thyself as much as *one* of them, for *one* thou art; and, Love one of them as much as thyself, for one he is.' *God is no respecter of persons;* and the law which he has given us is the transcript of his own heart. The good of one man appears as valuable in his sight, as the good of another; that is, going on the ground of their possessing equal capacity for enjoyment; and the law of love which worketh no ill to its neighbor, requires that we should view things just as he does. And it is certain that nothing short of my loving my neighbor as myself, even so as to value his interest and happiness, *as much* as my own, will lay a foundation for a *perfect oneness* between me and my neighbor, so as effectually and forever to prevent all discord, hatred, and envy; and prepare me to rejoice in all *his joy.*

In this statement I go on the ground, that my neighbor has as great a place in the system of intelligent beings as myself. My happiness, it is true, is placed more under my *immediate* care, than my neighbor's: I can do things for the health and comfort of my own body, and of my own soul, which I cannot do for my neighbor. I can exercise repentance and faith, so as to become thereby interested in the great atonement; but I cannot do this for him. I am my own keeper, in such a sense as I am not his. But if I make the law of God my rule, I shall not pay this particular attention to

myself, because I place a higher value on my own interest than on my neighbor's.

As it belonged to the little atom of which we just now spake, not only to cleave to the surface of the earth, but also, in connexion with its kindred atoms, to revolve around the sun, the center of the material system; so it becomes an individual man, not only to love his neighbor as himself, but to love the Lord his God with all his heart; which would be to revolve around the Sun of righteousness, the center of moral attraction. There is no doubt a harmony between the works of the Creator. One use of the material system, and of the laws which regulate it, is to illustrate the beauty and order, and point out the obligation of the moral system. *Attraction* to the world of matter, is the same as *disinterested*, or *unselfish love*, to the moral world.

From what has now been said, it will be seen, that disinterested love does not imply a *hatred* of ourselves, unless it be in a comparative sense, that is, the loving of ourselves *less* than some other object. In this comparative sense, we are most expressly commanded to hate ourselves. "If any man come to me," said our blessed Lord, "and *hate not* his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and *his own life* also, he cannot be my disciple." Luke xiv. 26. We know that our Lord did not require *malicious* hatred to be exercised towards any one; but from the passage before us, it is certain, that he required us to love him supremely, so as to weigh down all the love which we have for our nearest and dearest relatives, and also for *ourselves*. But if we love Christ, only because we think he loves *us*; is not this, after all, loving ourselves more than Christ?

III. It is objected, that the scheme of disinterested and universal benevolence, proposes too great an object for a *finite* mind. "Who but the infinite God," says my antagonist, "can have such a comprehensive view of all things as to know, in every case, what is best for the general and universal good? Certainly no finite mind is adequate to take such a comprehensive survey of universal existence, as to know what line of conduct

will best conduce to the *good of all*———To seek the good of "being in general," he adds, I must have a knowledge of "being in general."—But to such knowledge I cannot hope to attain; and therefore I must be totally discouraged from ever acting from an acceptable motive." p. 273. To this it may be replied; that it is far from being necessary, for the exercise of disinterested and universal good-will, that we should be able to know the exact number of individual beings which compose the universe. Adam and Eve might be said to be possessed of this enlarged affection of heart, while they did not know that any rational beings, but themselves and their Creator, were in existence, to draw forth this affection. But in the possession of this holy affection, they would be prepared to love angels, as soon as they knew that such beings existed. The same kind of affection would prepare them to embrace new objects of love, as fast as they should be presented to their knowledge. It is not improper to say, that they possessed universal benevolence, when but few of the objects, which the Creator designed should receive this benevolence, were known; or when but few of them had as yet come into existence. A child may be possessed of good-will to mankind in general, when he has not been out of sight of his father's house, and when he has not the least idea about the extent, and population of the globe. If he possesses disinterested love to those whom he does know, he has a heart to love those whom he does not know, and will love them as fast as he becomes acquainted with them. But if his heart be under the dominion of selfishness, even a liberal education, followed by travels through the world, will not enkindle in his breast the least spark of universal benevolence. The child *Jesus* had this enlarged love when he was in childhood, tho' as to his human nature, his knowledge was much more circumscribed than when he had grown to the stature of a man. He uniformly had a disinterested, and not a selfish object in view, tho' he was continually acquiring more enlarged views of that disinterested object.

All holy beings in the universe possess one character. They all seek one and the same object. This is true of God, holy angels, and holy men; whether in heaven,

or on the earth. But this does not suppose, that they all have an equally comprehensive view of this great object which they seek. They all unite in loving the same great and holy God. But "who by searching can find out God? who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?" According to the argument of my antagonist, it will follow, that we cannot love God, because our finite minds are inadequate to take a comprehensive survey of his unlimited existence. It is true, there is none but the Infinite Mind which can comprehend itself, and know how great an object here is, towards which love is to be exercised; but the least babe in Christ loves the same great and glorious God, who is loved by the most exalted spirit in glory; and the same, who is loved by the Infinite Mind itself.

The objection which we are considering supposes; that in order to be governed by that disinterested love, which seeks the general and universal good, we must be able to know in every case what is best for the universe. It is very true, that no being is fit to *preside* over the universe, and be its God, unless he can know in every case what is best for the general and universal good: But surely a creature may *love* the universe, without usurping the throne of the Almighty, or attempting to become his counsellor. A subject may love and seek the good of the kingdom, as well as his prince; and yet never attempt to make any laws, or recommend any political arrangements for its benefit. And the meanest subject of the kingdom of Christ may, and does, prefer Jerusalem above his chief joy. He seeks the peace and prosperity of this extensive and everlasting kingdom, without thinking himself, in any measure, adequate to take the place of the King. He desires and seeks the good of this great kingdom; but he does it upon a small scale; he does not pretend to have the whole kingdom pass under his eye. Does not the christian in private life, who is not known out of the pale of his own church, seek the general good of the kingdom of Christ, as really as the missionary who crosses half the globe, to make known the great salvation? The latter moves in a larger sphere than the former, and probably takes in a more enlarged view of

that kingdom which he is seeking to build up; but they both have the same noble and glorious object in view.

That we are required to seek the general good of the universe, is manifest from the two comprehensive commands given us by the Saviour. In these we are required to love God and our neighbor. And by the explanation which he himself gave us of the word *neighbor*, in the 10th chapter of Luke, it is natural to understand by it any fellow creature, whether of our own, or of a foreign nation; whether belonging to our own, or to another world. We know that angels love men, for they rejoice when we repent; and why should not men love angels? And if we should love angels, why not other rational creatures, if such creatures exist? We are commanded not only to love God, but to glorify him, and to make the glorifying of him our constant object, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do. We are also required to manifest our universal love to mankind, by doing good to all men as we have opportunity. Now if it be asked, what methods we shall take to promote the glory of God, and the good of mankind?, the answer is; We must be directed by the written word. We must worship God, and in every respect treat him according as he has required us.—We must perform all those duties to ourselves, and to our families, which are enjoined. We must treat all, with whom we have any thing to do, as we would have them treat us. We must let our light shine, that men may thereby be led to glorify our Father who is in heaven. We must seek to benefit those by our *prayers*, whom we cannot reach, or cannot allure by our example.—And if it be not our province to visit the remote corners of the earth, to be the instruments of enlightening them with the knowledge of the gospel, our silver and gold may enable others to do this benevolent and necessary work.

If it should now be asked, whether all who do these things are possessed of universal benevolence; it may be answered,—This will be determined by the motive which excites them to do these things. If their own honor and happiness, either temporal or eternal, be their ultimate end, they are not benevolent but selfish;

for thus it is written: "And tho' I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and tho' I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." But it will be asked, whether christians are not *happy*, in seeking the glory of God and the good of mankind. Yes, they delight in doing it, else they would not be christians: but they delight in this great object, for what it is in *itself*, and not because they view it as being now accommodated to their own interest. Therefore, if they were to lose their hope of being personally interested in the good of the universe, and yet retain their disinterested love, they would still seek and desire this great good, and would rejoice in the certainty, that it was secured by the perfect government of Jehovah.*

IV. It is brought in as another objection to *disinterested* benevolence; that God himself is not, in this sense, benevolent. "Where," says the author of the Letters, "is disinterested benevolence to be found? Not in *God*, surely. *He* seeks the manifestation of his *own glory*, in all his works and ways." p. 274. If this argument has truth in it, the argument must be forcible indeed, for God is most assuredly the great

* This is by no means the supposition of an impossible case. The christian's hope of his own safe state, undergoes many changes. Cases are not very uncommon, where the christian, for a season, gives up the hope of his personal interest in the covenants of promise. He views himself as being, not *with* Christ, but *against* him. But still he does not act *against* him, but *for* him. He has a tender concern for his precious cause; and it is the fixed purpose of his heart, while he lives, to do what he can to promote it, tho' it is his present expectation, when he dies, to be separated from all good forever. If any one should say, that such a case is impossible, seeing the christian must know, that such feelings of attachment to Christ and his cause, are a clear indication of the sanctification of his heart; ——we reply; The christian does by no means always judge correctly of his own feelings, and of his own state. Zion may say, "My God hath forgotten me," when it is not so. The possessing of right feelings, and the believing that we possess such feelings, are two different things. That man, who has seen the deceitfulness of his own heart, is more afraid of being deceived by it, than he who has not been convinced by the Spirit, that *the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.*

standard of moral perfection. His command to us is, "Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." If that love which we call *disinterested*, be not the same kind of affection, which the scriptures ascribe, in an infinite degree, to the Supreme Being; if it be not the *love of God* shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, then it cannot be the love which he requires of us.

But does my antagonist design to intimate, that God is a *selfish* Being? I am sure he cannot but see, that God has forbidden us to be selfish beings, and yet has required us to be conformed to himself. Is not selfishness in men, most pointedly condemned in such passages as these?——'And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did ye not eat for *yourselves*, and drink for *yourselves?*" Zech. vii. 6. "For all seek *their own*, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." Phil. ii. 21: "For men shall be lovers of their *ownselves*." 2 Tim. iii. 2: "Let no man seek *his own*; but every man another's wealth." 1 Cor. x. 24. Now, if God be a selfish Being, the character which is so pointedly condemned in these passages of scripture, must nevertheless be in conformity to his own. Selfishness is the same thing, let it exist where it will; whether in a being of great or small capacity. If the Divine Being were selfish at all, he must be infinitely selfish; and according to this, the greater degree of selfishness any creature should possess, the more would he resemble his Creator. But how evident it is, that the Creator claims such a character, and proposes himself to us as the great pattern of a love which is not selfish. It is written in his holy word; "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation," &c. Phil. ii. 4—8. Here Christ Jesus, as existing in the form of God, that is, in his divine nature, is proposed to us as a pattern of disinterested affection. In this portion of scripture he is held up to our view as one who did not look on his own things, but also on the things of others. John in his first epis-

tle, chap. iv. ver. 8, says, "God is love:" He then adds, "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." The mercy of God to sinners, is here brought into view as a manifestation of his love, and as a striking proof that he is in reality not a selfish, but a most benevolent Being.

But does not the scripture say, "The Lord hath made all things for *himself?*" This is true, and yet Jehovah is not a selfish, but a disinterestedly benevolent Being. We have already shown, that all love to one's own person, is not of necessity selfish love. In answering the second objection, selfishness was defined to be a *supreme* regard to one's self, not because this object was of such superlative worth in the intellectual system, but because it was *self*. The commandment says, "Love thy neighbor as thyself;" and it does also in effect say, 'Love thyself as thy neighbor.' Those creatures, in whose heart this law is perfectly written, are as unselfish or disinterested in the love which they exercise *towards themselves*, as in the love they exercise towards their neighbor. The love, which totally depraved creatures exercise towards themselves, is no part of obedience to the divine law, tho' this law requires some love to be exercised towards themselves, as well as towards their neighbor. When the love which we bear to ourselves, is in conformity to the divine law, it will not lead, or permit us, to make war upon the general interests of society, for the sake of acquiring any supposed honor, or advantage to ourselves. But the self-love of a depraved being, will lead him to sacrifice the greatest quantity of general good, even the whole, to promote what he conceives to be his own happiness.

Benevolent beings have thrown all they are worth into a common stock, and unite together in seeking the greatest general good.* That which they have thrown

* This communion of interest is totally different from that which exists among a company of robbers, or avaricious merchants, or selfish patriots, if such patriots are found among us. In all these cases, there is an appearance of throwing all into a common stock, with a view to promote a common in-

into this common stock, they regard in proportion to its worth. All will be able to see, that upon the principles of the most disinterested (or unselfish) love, it will be consistent for the Supreme Being, to exercise some love to *himself*; for *his* existence and capacity for happiness are no less valuable, on account of their being his *own*. The question will now arise, How much, consistent with the most perfect disinterestedness, may the Deity love and regard himself? The answer is, He may love and regard himself, according to his worthiness to be loved and regarded. And this he *must* do, or he would not be perfectly benevolent.

Let us again have allusion to the material system, to illustrate our subject. It behoved the little atom to take its place with its kindred atoms on the surface of the earth; but it does not behove the Sun to leave the centre of the system, and take the place of an atom. This would be as contrary to the order and harmony of the system, as for the atom to claim to be the centre. The Sun must maintain its own majestic station, and require atoms and worlds to revolve around it, as their common centre. But how feeble is the illustration. There is some comparison between the quantity of matter in the sun, and in one of its surrounding planets; yea, between the quantity of matter in the sun, and the supposed atom: But who can be compared with God? *Behold the nations are but as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.* ——— *All nations be-*

terest: but the truth is, that each man seeks the promotion of this common interest, merely for the sake of his own private interest which is connected with it. Private interest is all, which, in these cases, gives any value to public interest. But fellowship among benevolent beings is built on an entirely different foundation. Their common interest is not an arbitrary matter; or the result of nice calculations of the gains which will probably arise from the partnership;———No, their common interest is dear to them all, considered as a *common* interest;—their fellowship is a union of kindred souls, who are made blessed by *doing*, as well as by *receiving* good. In this benevolent community, (which resembles the natural body,) when one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; and when one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. See 1 Cor. chap. xii.

fore him are as nothing, and vanity. Between all *finites* there is some comparison: but between all finites in an aggregate, and *infinity*, there is no comparison. God may therefore love himself supremely, even more than the whole intelligent creation when taken together, and yet have *no selfish* affection at all. Nay, the most impartial, and disinterested affection requires him to regard himself, more than all intelligent existence besides. Such supreme love he claims from us. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all thy heart*, and with *all thy soul*, and with *all thy mind*, and with *all thy strength*: this is the first commandment." He claims from us more love than we are to exercise to any creature, and even to all creatures, ourselves included. This is made evident by comparing this command, with what the Saviour declares indispensably requisite, to becoming his disciple; even to hate (in a comparative sense,) father and mother, wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and our own life also.

If this command, which requires us to love God more than all creatures *in mass*, is founded in the nature and fitness of things, it is as suitable that it should regulate *his* affections, as *ours*. It would not be consistent for him to require us to love him with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, if he were not worthy of the same supreme regard from himself; and if he is worthy of his own supreme love, then there is nothing contrary to the most disinterested benevolence, in his loving himself with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength.

Let it also be remembered, that originally there was no other being in existence, except him who inhabiteth eternity; he must therefore have made all things for himself, as there was no other, for whom he could make them. But his making all things for himself, does by no means exclude his benevolent regard for the happiness of the creature, as we shall have occasion to show in answering the next objection. There is one other thing, which may perhaps reflect light upon the disinterestedness of the love which the Most High exercises towards himself. If our views of Divine benevolence are correct, the Most High does not love himself any more because it is himself, than he would love another

being, if there were another such being to be loved. Now, though there is not a plurality of Gods, yet according to the doctrine, believed in common between us, and our theological antagonists, there is a *plurality* of *Persons* in the one only living and true God. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the three Persons in the Godhead, are represented as possessed each of infinite perfections; and they are represented as *one*, not only in essence, but by mutual and endearing love. The Father loves the Son with an infinite love, even equal to the love which he bears to his own Person. This love is perfectly reciprocated by the Son, the second Person in the Godhead. Both the Persons are as perfectly united in affection to the Holy Ghost, as to each other; and the Holy Ghost is, by the same infinitely strong affection, united to the Father, and to the Son. Is not here a display of the most impartial and disinterested love, on *a great scale*—subsisting between three infinite Persons in one Godhead? As it respects their *oneness of affection*, this is the great pattern for rational creatures to imitate. This appears in the Saviour's prayer to the Father, recorded in the 17th chapter of John: "Neither pray I for these only, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us."

V. It is urged that God himself seeks the creature's good, and therefore the creature need not feel under obligation to be disinterested. After Mr. B. had said, that disinterested benevolence was something to which man was a total stranger, he adds; "It is manifest from the concurrent testimony of holy scripture, that all the designs of God towards fallen man, are not only for the exhibition of his own infinite glory, but also for the happiness of his intelligent creatures." It is a sentiment, in the belief of which we are full, that the Divine Creator, in making an exhibition of his infinite glory, must of necessity do that which will insure *the greatest perfection* and *blessedness* of the *created system*. His infinite glory consists in his all-sufficiency to do what he pleases, and in his being infinitely disposed to do good. Such perfections cannot be displayed, without a good creation's being the result. They cannot be displayed

to the best advantage, without *the best possible* creation. In our view it would be, either a high impeachment of the *character* of the Deity; or a denial of the infinite perfection of his natural attributes, (such as knowledge and power,) to say, there *could* have been a *better* created system, than he has produced. The adoring Psalmist cries out, "How manifest are thy works! *In wisdom thou hast created them all.*"*

God's seeking his own glory, and his promoting the good of his *creation*, do no doubt go hand in hand. But his seeking his own glory, and the good of *every individual creature*, are not things inseparably connected; A part of his rational creatures are forever cut off from the society of holy and blessed beings. This is the case with the fallen angels, and with those of the race of Adam, who are now spirits in prison. The greatest general good does not require that these creatures should be made happy; nor will the general good admit of their happiness. From this it appears, that while the greatest general good of the created system, cannot, on any consideration, be relinquished, the good of many individuals may be given up forever. To seek the glory of God, and to seek the peace of Jerusalem, meet in one,

* We conclude, it is clear to every mind, that it would have been inconsistent with the infinite perfection of the eternal God, to have selected from all possible systems, the very worst, i. e. the one which should have contained in it the least good. But why would it have been inconsistent,—only on this ground, that a good Being must prefer a good, to a bad system? But if the mind revolts at the thought, that an all-sufficient and good Being should choose the very worst of all possible systems, will it be at rest by a belief, that he did not choose the very worst, but the system which stood next in preference?—We will suppose, that ten thousand other possible systems, rising one above another in excellence, and all preferable to this, stood full in the view of the Infinite Mind;—would it be consistent with that perfection, which we ought to ascribe to God, to suppose he should fix his choice on a system so comparatively undesirable? If it is seen to be inconsistent with infinite perfection, to select, from all the systems which he had power to originate, one of so inferior a value,—I would ask, where would it be consistent for Jehovah to fix his choice? How far short of the best of all these possible systems can he stop, and still appear to act in character, as a Being of *infinite wisdom, of unlimited power, and perfect goodness*?

and terminate in the same thing: But seeking my own individual happiness, is not the same thing as seeking the glory of God. He does not seek the happiness of an individual, as he seeks his own glory, for his own glory he will not relinquish; but he seeks the good of his church, as invariably as he seeks his own glory.—It is his own cause. When the God of peace takes any of his creatures into an everlasting covenant, which, all will grant, is the case with those already arrived in glory, then *their individual* happiness is made as sure, as his own glory. *All things work together for good to them that love God.* But certainly this does not make it right for a creature to regard his own happiness, as being of equal value with the glory of God; or of equal value with the happiness of all the rest of the creation. And if it were possible for one of those blessed creatures which are in heaven, to make a chief end of his own happiness, there would be nothing in his *hallelujahs* any more acceptable to the thrice holy One, than in the blasphemies of the spirits in prison: "For the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord." And that creature who makes himself, and only himself, his chief end, let him be in what world he will, is completely wicked. The whole of our unconverted state is described by the apostle, (2 Cor. v. 15,) by men's living unto *themselves*. We know that God has connected the eternal good of the elect world, including angels and men, with his own glory; but will it follow hence, that every one of these creatures may make a chief end of his own happiness? Nothing can preserve the purity, peace, and blessedness of the heavenly society, short of a perfection of that charity, which "seeketh not her *own*." This is the only "bond of perfectness." Every inhabitant of heaven will eternally have a supreme regard to the Divine Being, in all which he does; and each will love the other as himself.

We have shown how the inhabitants of *heaven* will feel; we would now ask, How ought the inhabitants of *hell* to feel? Or is there no *ought*, no obligation, on them? Has it become innocent for them to hate God and disregard the good of the universe? All their enjoyment is righteously taken away from them, and they

are imprisoned, that their punishment might promote the glory of God, and the good of his eternal kingdom; which great object they disregarded. "The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just." Their talents are taken away, and given to those whose talents were improved. It had been better for *them*, not to have been born; but it would not have been so well for the *universe*. Their glory is turned into shame and everlasting contempt; but God's glory is brightened by their condemnation: For "the Lord hath made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil."—Their laughter is turned into weeping, and their joy into eternal heaviness; but they will know, that there remains an innumerable multitude of creatures who are holy and blessed. They will doubtless know, that all the natural and moral evil in the creation, will through the great power and goodness of God, turn out to the advancement of general good. Now, will it be right for these reprobates to feel, that all this display of the Creator's glory, and all this holiness and blessedness in the creation, are *nothing? It will be right*, if this principle be correct, 'That every being has a right to make his own good, his chief end:' But if general good, or, what is the same, the glory of God, ought to be the chief end, then reprobates have no right to feel indifferent about the good of the universe, on account of their having no part nor lot in this matter.

VI. It is objected to the doctrine of disinterested love; 'That *good is promised* and *evil threatened*, to induce men to do their duty.' "That a christian," says the author of the Letters, "may have an eye to his eternal reward in all he does, is abundantly demonstrated from scripture." We are not disposed to invalidate the use of the promises, and threatenings of God's word; but we believe them to be in harmony with the doctrine, which was advanced in the Sermons. We have already shown, that perfect disinterestedness does no more, than to bring us to take our *own place* in the system. It only preserves us from thinking of ourselves "more highly than we ought to think." As it is right to seek the good of our neighbors, so it is right to seek our own. As it is suitable for Christ to say to one of his ministers, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto

to thy doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt save *them* that *hear* thee;" so it is equally suitable to say, "For in doing this thou shalt save *thyself*." The doctrine which we advocate, has no tendency to make men indifferent, and stupid about their own happiness. It has no tendency to make eternal felicity in heaven, or eternal misery in hell, appear like trifles. It has no tendency to make men neglect the great salvation. The doctrine, it is true, supposes there is a greater good than the eternal blessedness of an individual, and that there is a greater evil than even the loss of a soul. Therefore we believe, that in the exercise of holy, unselfish love, a sinner may accept of the punishment of his sins, and feel reconciled to God, while he does not know but that this deserved punishment will be actually *inflicted* upon himself. Even now he does not love his misery, but he loves justice; he loves the general good. If God can be glorified, and the good of his kingdom be secured, and he saved; his personal salvation from sin and misery, will appear like a great favor; otherwise it will appear, on the whole, to be undesirable. As the Saviour, in his agony, said, *Father, glorify thy name;* so have his disciples in their distresses, resolved all their petitions into this one, *The will of the Lord be done!* "Behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." Acts xxi. 14; 2 Sam. xv. 26.

Although personal rewards are held up to view, to encourage obedience; yet they are not proposed as the *chief* end. It is true, that God by his word makes this known to us; that the line of conduct which he requires of us, and which is pleasing to him, will also insure our own well-being. Yet this does not give us a right to make as great an object of our own well-being, as of his glory.*

* In the Assembly of Divines' Shorter Catechism, the first question is, "What is the chief end of man?" The answer is, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy him forever."—They probably meant, that if we did make *God's glory* our *chief* end, we should enjoy him forever: or else; that the greatest good which we could seek for *ourselves*, was the eternal enjoyment of God. But it ought not to be understood

But in answering this objection, it is of unspeakable importance, that we do not lose sight of the *nature* of those rewards, which God promises to them who love him. Let us make the supposition, that Moses had arrived to a mature age before he became an "Israelite indeed." In this case, we must conceive of him, as once having respect to earthly honors. Now let the supposition be made, that he relinquished fair prospects in the court of Egypt, for fairer prospects in the court of Heaven, without changing his supreme object, namely, his own aggrandizement: would there in reality have been any change in his character? Is selfishness any better when it relates to eternity, than when it is confined to time? It is true, that Moses, when considered as an *Israelite indeed*, "had respect to the recompense of reward;" but it was such a reward as a *selfish* creature could not enjoy. Christ encourages his disciples, that they shall hereafter be with him where he is, to behold his glory. But those disciples of his, whose love is selfish, would not be entertained by beholding his glory. In heaven there will be the most perfect humility, therefore proud spirits cannot desire *such a heaven*. There they will serve him day and night, not for the sake of retaining their exalted station, but from the most unfeigned love.

If a servant should be induced to be very faithful to his master, during a specified time of trial, not only from present delight in his service, but with the hope that if he is faithful now he shall be confirmed in this service, and have liberty to serve, and please, and enjoy his dear master as long as he lives, it would prove him to be something more than an eye-servant. If the servant should be induced to do well through his time of probation, thinking, that if he can only get *confirmed* as a servant, he shall have a master who will be obliged to take care of him, and that then he will be able to relax his exertions, and not be so attentive to his master's interest; this would look like seeking his own interest as his chief end. But if he did actually look upon it as a great privilege, to be confirmed in the service of this

that the eternal happiness of any man *is* to be sought, as his chief end, *equally* with the glory of God.

master, not principally for the sake of his own support, but rather that he might be in the best situation, to promote the interest of a master, whom he esteemed as worthy of all his most devoted services, and that he might have the best advantages to receive new evidences of the excellency of his character;——if with these things in view he should be stimulated to acquit himself well, during the term of trial, it would be proper to say, that he did not appear like a selfish servant; but that even in his respect to the promised reward, he manifested much *disinterestedness*.

The pure nature of heavenly felicity, and the disinterestedness of the saints, in having respect to such reward, may in some measure be learned from the following sketches, which are taken from the private writings of Mr Brainerd, the Indian Missionary: "I viewed," says this good man, "the infinite excellency of God, and my soul even broke with longings, that God should be glorified. I thought of dignity in heaven; but instantly the thought returned, I do not go to heaven to get honor, but to give all possible glory and praise. O, I was made for eternity, if God might be glorified!——My heaven is to please God, and glorify him, and give all to him, and to be wholly devoted to his glory; that is the heaven I long for, that is my religion, and that is my happiness; and always was ever since I supposed I had any true religion: and all those that are of that religion shall meet me in heaven. I do not go to heaven to be advanced, but to give honor to God. It is no matter where I shall be stationed in heaven, whether I have a high or a low seat there; but to love and please and glorify God is all.——It is impossible for any rational creature to be happy without acting all for God: God himself could not make him happy any other way. I long to be in heaven praising and glorifying God with the holy angels. All my desire is to glorify God."

These were some of the views and feelings of that eminent christian, near the time when he was about to leave this world. The heaven which he seemed to pant after, was a heaven of *disinterested enjoyment*. The same holy blessedness Paul panted after, when he said; "I desire to depart, and *be with Christ*; which

is far better." Holy David desired the same when he said, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be *satisfied* when I awake, with *thy likeness*."

There is no fundamental difference between the character of the self-righteous religionist, and the selfish worldling. Each makes *himself* his supreme object: the one seeks an *eternal selfish* interest, and the other a *temporal selfish* interest. But does this make an entire change of character; merely to extend our selfishness from time to eternity? No, my dear readers, we must *deny ourselves*, or we cannot be the disciples of Christ. No man, if he would be a christian, must live unto himself, and no man must die unto himself; for whether we live, we must live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we must die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are to be the Lord's. [See Rom. xiv. 7, 8.]

As to divine *threatenings*; they convincingly prove, that the good of an individual is not God's chief end. If individual good were his chief end, he could not on any consideration take it away; but in his word he threatens utterly to take away all good from those who die in their sins, and to make them wretched forever. By acting the selfish part, seeking their own things, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's, they are threatened with the loss of all that blessedness, which God has prepared for them that love him; and also with the infliction of everlasting punishment, that thereby divine government might be established, and general good promoted. It is therefore evident, that if we go into the *spirit* of the *divine threatenings*, we shall not be influenced by them in a selfish way, for they are constructed on the plan of making more of general, than of private good; else the good of the guilty individual would not be relinquished for the sake of promoting the general good. While creatures are influenced by divine threatenings only in a selfish way, they are not represented in God's word, as any thing but graceless sinners. Divine threatenings make even devils tremble, but they are devils still. The children of men, while wholly selfish, are often awaked out of their security by the threatenings of God's word; and

it is wisely ordered that the threatenings should be able to take hold of their natural dread of misery, and love of happiness; for this awakened attention of the impenitent, is a matter of no small consequence in the success of the gospel; but so long as they are awed by these denunciations of divine wrath merely on this account, that they are levelled against their individual enjoyment, their fear is wholly of the slavish kind; ——it has not the nature of that fear of God, in which true religion consists. If a subject of the government of this State should be restrained from murder, or forgery, wholly through a dread of execution, or imprisonment, is he as good a subject as he ought to be? Ought he not to be governed by a more disinterested motive?

The threatenings of evil annexed to the divine law, serve to express the infinite opposition of the supreme Lawgiver against sin. As such, they ought to have great influence on all his rational creatures. They show how determined he is to defend, and protect his holy kingdom: for his threatenings are all pointed against the enemies of this kingdom, and against none others. The threatenings then may be considered as calling aloud upon us, to prefer Jerusalem above our chief joy. We have seen that disinterested benevolence consists, in part, in a man's loving himself, as well as in loving his neighbor. Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, neither does it rejoice in misery. If I love my neighbor, it will be distressing to me, to think of his being miserable to all eternity. His misery, however, will not appear to be as great an evil, as for Jehovah to lose his glory; or as for the general good to be renounced. In seeking his deliverance therefore from eternal punishment, I have no right to make war against the Lord of hosts, and seek to break open the prison of the Divine Government: but if while he is in this world of mercy, he can, consistently with the divine glory, be *unfitted* for hell, and be *prepared* for heaven, I ought greatly to desire it. Disinterested benevolence not only admits this, but requires it. *I endure*, said the benevolent apostle, *I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.* As disinterested love requires me to

seek my *neighbor's* salvation from endless misery, so it requires me to seek *my own:* My eternal, as well as my temporal interests are put more immediately under my care, than are those of my neighbor; and I am under pressing obligation to attend to them. God has required it at my hands. He has said to the wicked, *Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?* While every one ought to feel that he deserves the damnation of hell, he ought also to feel that he is under perfect obligation, in obedience to the gospel, to flee from this wrath to come, and lay hold on the hope set before him. In neglecting to do this, he not only *sinneth against the blessed Redeemer*, but *he* also *wrongeth his own soul.* To submit to punishment, as the due reward of our deeds, is noble: but to plunge into eternal misery, through a stupid inattention to the worth of the soul, and a neglect of the great salvation, is wicked and foolish beyond our conception.

How important is the subject to which the reader's attention has now been called. Let him not view it as a matter of mere speculation. That love which goes out of self, and centres in God, is the fulfilling of the law. It is this, which makes the righteous more excellent than his neighbor. It is this, which makes the convert differ from what he was in his unconverted state. His repentance and his faith, his prayers and his zeal in religion, would not make him essentially to differ from his former self, if his chief end were the same;—if all this apparent regard to his Maker, terminated in supreme regard to himself.

"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Disinterested love is the ground work of that holiness, which is necessary to prepare men for heaven. This is the only love which tends, in its own nature, to union. All who possess this holy affection are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. And without this love, it is impossible that we should be admitted into the society of the blessed.

SECTION IX.

THOUGHTS ON THE NATURAL ABILITY, AND MORAL INABILITY OF SINNERS, SUGGESTED BY READING WHAT IS FOUND IN MR. BANGS' LETTERS ON THIS SUBJECT.

THE subject relative to the sinner's natural ability to do that to which his heart is wholly disinclined, was not very particularly brought into view in the Sermons, against which Mr. Bangs has written: but as he has taken considerable notice of this matter in his Letters, I shall make some concise remarks on what he has offered. He thus writes, (pp. 283, 284:) "To say that men have power, *naturally* to love God, while they have a "moral inability," is a manifest contradiction. *Inability* supposes a want of *power*; and therefore to say that a man has power to do a thing, and at the same time contend that there is an *inability* to do that thing, is saying that a man *has power*, and yet *has not power*. Let the *inability* be *natural* or *moral*; it is certain that, so long as that inability remains, the sinner has not power to comply with the requirements of the divine law." When we have examined these two things apart, viz. the sinners *natural ability* and moral *inability*, to do what God requires of him, we shall then see if we cannot bring them together, and make them harmonize.

I. Let us examine into the sinner's *natural ability* to do what God requires of him. God requires of the totally depraved sinner, to love him, to repent of his sins,

believe in Christ, and obey his holy precepts. Now we say, that the sinner is under no natural inability to comply with these requirements. Here we use the word *natural*, as opposed to *moral*, and not in contrast with *unnatural*. We grant, that in a moral or spiritual sense, it is *natural* for the sinner to refuse compliance. When we are speaking of the sinner's heart, we say, it is as natural for him to sin as for the sparks to fly upward. But still it is proper to say, that he is *capable* of doing better; he is capable of doing his duty. This is the same as to say, that he is *able* to do what God requires of him. And if he is able, then it is proper to say, he has an ability. But as by this ability, we do not design at all to bring into view the present disposition of his heart, or to say any thing about his *willingness* to love and serve God, we distinguish it from that holy ability or willingness of mind, by calling it a *natural* ability. By this we mean, that he has powers and faculties, which belong to his *nature* as a rational moral agent, which are sufficient to enable him to do all that which he is commanded. He has natural ability to do all which he is *great* enough to do, whether he is *good* enough to do it or not. He has natural ability to love God with all his understanding and strength, when his heart is full of enmity. But he has not ability of any kind, to love with more than all his understanding and strength.

Theological writers have for a long time made a distinction between the *natural* and *moral* attributes of God. By the *natural*, they have meant those attributes which exhibit him as an intelligent being, infinite in greatness, without directly bringing into view his holiness; and by the *moral* attributes, they have meant those holy affections, which make a being who is infinitely great, to be also infinitely lovely. According to this distinction, which divines have been accustomed to make, it is proper to say, while we look only at the natural attributes, that the Divine Being has infinite natural ability, to exercise holy affection, and do good. And since his heart is as holy, as his understanding is great, his natural ability to be, and do good, is resisted by no moral inability, or indisposition of mind. This use of the words, *natural* and *moral*, when appli-

ed to the attributes of the Creator, will serve to show how they are used in application to the ability of his rational creatures.

When we speak of the natural ability of a *creature*, we do not include the idea of independence in the least degree, for such ability is to be found only in the great First Cause of all things. But we speak of *men*, as being *able* to do things which irrational creatures cannot do; and of some men, as being able to do things which others cannot. And we speak of the existence of these different degrees of ability, without taking into the account the disposition of the mind to exert this power, whether in this or that manner. Therefore it must be a natural, and not a moral ability, which we have in our view.

Let us for the present drop the *name*, and look at the *thing*. Who is there that does not hold to such a thing as we intend by a natural ability to obey divine requirements? What believer in divine revelation can there be, who does not hold, that all men, to whom the gospel is sent, are, in some sense or other, capable of receiving it? There is something in men, wherein they differ from stones, vegetables and brutes; which makes it proper that their Creator should make known his will to them, and require their hearty consent and obedience, let their present character be what it may. Therefore while the Most High addresses no commands to stones, and trees, and brutes, "he commandeth *all men* every where to repent." He does not command the literal vipers to cease to be venomous; but he calls on sinful men, who are very aptly termed "a generation of vipers," to repent, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Now if men were, in every sense, as incapable of the exercise of repentance, as stones, or as the serpents which crawl on the earth, would the Lord require repentance of them? and would he say, Except ye repent ye shall all perish? And would he blame them for impenitence, as he manifestly does?

II. Let us now, for a moment, attend to the sinner's *inability* to comply with divine requirements. By this it is not meant, that the powers of moral agency in sinful men are so weak and enfeebled, that they have no

power to put forth actions of a moral nature. No, depraved men are wise to do evil, and they are capable of sinning with a high hand. Moral inability, in application to the sinner, is wholly a wicked thing. It is an unholy, unreasonable incapacity to obey holy and reasonable requirements. It is a heart "*fully set* to do evil;" "dead in trespasses and sins." Moral inability relates wholly to the temper and disposition of the heart. We are morally unable to do that which we do not choose to do, tho' the thing itself is at the same time within the compass of our natural powers and faculties. As those attributes in God, which serve to bring his *character* into view, are called his *moral* attributes, so here; the inability of the sinner which exhibits his *character*, is termed a *moral* inability.

When we say, that sinners labor under a moral inability to do their duty, or to accept of gospel invitations, it is the same as to say, their hearts are wholly opposed to duty, and altogether unwilling to take Christ's easy yoke upon their necks. But why, it will be asked, do you call this unwillingness by the name of *inability?* Why not say, that men are, in every sense, *able* to do their duty? Why do you say, that they labor under a moral inability to do their duty? To this we reply, that the *phrase*, "moral inability," is not the great thing or which we contend. The great thing for which we contend, is; that men, in their unrenewed state, do possess such a temper and disposition of heart, as serves effectually to prevent them from heartily complying with divine requirements: Or in other words, that unrenewed men are, as it respects their hearts, *totally depraved.* For proof on the subject of total depravity, the reader is referred to the second section in this work, and to the second sermon in the volume of sermons, to which reference has so often been had.

Tho' I have said, that the *phrase* is not the great thing for which we contend, yet I view it as a proper phrase, and one which is justified by the language of the scriptures, and by the language now in use among men. The scriptures say, "It is *impossible* for God to lie," when it is manifest, that they refer to an impossibility which arises from his moral perfection, and not through any deficiency in his natural attributes, by

which he is incapacitated to lie. When Moses is speaking of the envious feelings which Joseph's brethren exercised towards him, he says, "They hated him and *could not* speak peaceably unto him." "Could not," is the same as to be *unable*, or to labor under an *inability*. Jesus Christ said to the Jews, "How *can* ye believe, which receive honor one of another?" Again he said, "Ye *cannot* hear my words." And again he said, "No man *can* come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him."* In all these cases, it is not a want of physical or natural strength of body or mind, which creates the difficulty. It is clearly a difficulty which arises from a wrong temper of heart; and yet is termed a *cannot*; which is the same as an *inability*. But to distinguish it from a thing rendered difficult or impossible, through want of corporal or mental strength, we term it a *moral* inability. This use of the word *cannot* or inability, when applied to things rendered impossible by the perfect opposition of the heart to those things, is not only sanctioned by the scriptures, but also by the present and common use of

* This last text is found in John, chap. vi. ver. 44. In chap. v. ver. 40, the same unerring teacher, in an address to hearers of the same character, said; "And ye *will not* come to me, that ye might have life." In this last text he manifestly makes the sinner's incapacity to become a true believer, to consist in the wicked and inexcusable disinclination of the will, which is what we term a moral inability. And ought we to suppose, that the other text teaches some other kind of inability, which is of an excusable nature? Such a thought cannot for a moment be indulged. The text in the 6th chapter, by a *cannot*, brings the same kind of incapacity into view, which the other text does by a *will not*.* Do you ask, Why then is the mode of expression changed? We answer; The declaration, "Ye will not come," taught their present indisposition, yet did not explicitly teach that this was their fixed character: But the declaration, "*No* man *can come* to me, *except* the *Father* which hath sent me, *draw* him;" teaches that this indisposition, this "will not," is the *fixed* character of sinners, even of all the sinners in the world, so that there is *no man* who is an exception to it. It also teaches, that this indisposition of heart, this moral inability, will never of itself be removed; but that it must be removed by an immediate interposition of divine power and grace. "Which were born, not of the *will of the flesh*, but of God."

language. It is common to say, that we *cannot* do things, which nothing hinders us from doing, except an indisposition of mind. We say of a drunken *sot*, that he *cannot* leave his cups, and of a niggard, that he is *incapable* of a generous action. But in these cases, we do not think of inventing an excuse for drunkenness, or for niggardness.

Where now is Mr. B's difficulty of reconciling these two things together; a *natural ability* to do that which there is a *moral inability* to do? He says, "To say that men have power naturally to love God, while they have a moral inability, is a manifest contradiction."—How is the contradiction manifest? If there be no distinction between a *natural* and a *moral* inability, we acknowledge there is a manifest contradiction. To say, that a man is able, and unable, in the same sense, to do the same thing, would be contradictory. Thus, to say, that a man is able as it respects his bodily strength to labor, and that in the same sense he is not able to labor, would be absurd. But to say, that a man is, in one sense, able to labor, and that in another sense, he is unable, would not necessarily be absurd; for he might be able to labor, as his strength and health are respected, and be unable to labor, as it respects the disposition of his mind. In other words, a strong able-bodied man may be prevented from labor only by an indolent mind. If it should be said, that indolence is no inability; let it be remembered, it is what we mean by *moral* inability:—and it is just such a kind of inability as Joseph's brethren labored under when "they *could not* speak peaceably to him." Now, if this indolent man were indolent to perfection, so that he would starve sooner than he would work, still it would not change the nature of his inability from moral to natural. And if this indolent spirit were born with him, (which is apt to be the case with such characters,) yet it would not change its nature—It would still be a moral incapacity, tho' a moral incapacity which was entirely natural to him. It would still be speaking correctly, to say, that the man was naturally very capable of hard labor, but that he was under a dreadful inability of the moral kind, to perform the labor of a single day.

If there be no foundation for the distinction which we have made between an inability to love God, which arises from a want of the natural powers and faculties of a moral agent, and the inability which arises from the want of an upright frame of heart, then there is a want of consistency in our telling sinners, that they have a natural ability to obey; while they are totally depraved, and, in a spiritual sense, "without strength." But we are persuaded, that no theologian can get along without making the *distinction* which we have made, whether he makes use of the *same terms* to note this distinction or not. And if this distinction is founded in truth, then we are not guilty of the inconsistency with which Mr. B. has charged us. He says, "*Inability* supposes a want of *power*: and therefore to say that a man has power to do a thing, and at the same time contend that there is an *inability* to do that thing, is saying that a man *has power*, and yet *has not power*." To this difficulty I reply; An *inability*, if it be of the *moral* kind, does not by any means suppose the want of *natural* power. It supposes the want of no other power, except what belongs to that particular kind of inability. Thus, when we speak of the inability of the indolent man to work, it does not necessarily suppose any deficiency of natural power. His moral inability to labor, may be complete, and his natural ability for the same thing, as complete. In like manner, we may labor under a total moral inability to love our Creator, allowing our natural powers and faculties, which constitute our *natural ability* to love, be not at all impaired.

Mr. B's representation of our sentiments on the subject of the sinner's having a natural ability to do what he has no moral ability to do, is calculated to puzzle the mind of that reader, who is not in the habit of weighing what he reads. The words which are used, as making a true representation of our sentiments, seem to have such a strange clashing with each other, that the inattentive reader would be led to imagine, that none but men more fit for a mad-house, than to be christian teachers, could ever believe and propagate such self-contradictory doctrines. Mr. B. makes our doc-

trine to say, "A man *has power*, and yet *has not power*." It is devoutly to be wished that none may be misled by the mere sounds of words. Let it now be understood, that we do not hold to a sentiment so self-contradictory as this; That in the *same sense*, in which men *have power*, they *have not power*, to do their duty. But this sentiment we hold and seek to inculcate; that while by the fall we have lost the holy image of God, and have no heart to return to him, we have not lost the faculties necessary for moral agency, and are therefore under perfect obligation to make a proper use of these faculties, which would certainly imply a return to him from whom we have revolted. If by the fall we had been changed into brutes, instead of *sinners*, the Saviour would not say. "Come unto me,—and I will give you rest." And if by the fall we had not become so totally depraved, as to have *no heart* to accept this gracious invitation, the Son of God would not have said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him:" nor would he have taught the necessity of the power of the Holy Ghost to change our hearts, as preparatory to our accepting of gospel offers, and becoming interested in the benefits of his death. Here then is a natural ability to return to God, and a moral inability to return. In other words; Here is a rational creature, who has power to perform moral actions, who is at the same time perfectly wicked, and therefore morally or spiritually disabled from doing right. Should this creature be made the subject of a moral change, he will frankly say, "By the grace of God I am what I am." I should never, without the special power of the Spirit, have got rid of this moral inability, and found it in my heart to submit to the righteousness of God. And yet, every tear of repentance which he sheds, is proof that he is fully convinced that he was possessed of a natural ability to do this, and that his moral inability was "no cloke for his sin;" but that it was a wicked heart, *holding fast deceit and refusing to return*. The penitent feels ashamed of his past life. He is convinced that he has acted a most impious and foolish part, in so long living without God in the world. This necessarily implies a conviction,

that he was always possessed of natural ability to live a life of piety towards God, as well as a life of uprightness towards men. At the same time he has a conviction, which is equally clear, that nothing short of the conquering power of the king of saints, would ever have made him submit. Is not then this alleged contradiction harmonized in the experiences of every true penitent? That it may be thus harmonized in every mind, should be the prayer of the writer, and of all his readers.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

IN my reply to Mr. Bangs' objections against *Calvinistic doctrines*, I have not taken notice of every thing which threw itself in my way: yet I have detained my reader longer than I intended when I first took up my pen. The controversial part of my book will now be concluded, by a few brief remarks.

1. It is of great importance, that we should all seek to obtain the most *clear* and *definite* ideas, which we possibly can, concerning the leading doctrines of the gospel. It is not enough, that we believe there is a God; we ought to obtain just views of his *character*. We cannot fully *comprehend* his natural or moral perfections; but we can obtain *consistent* and *correct* views of them. If we do not entertain sentiments about the Divine Being, which are *essentially correct*, our religion will be no better than that of the men of Athens, who erected an altar to the *unknown* God. It is not enough, that we adopt the belief of *human depravity*; we ought to study to form a definite idea of the nature, and extent of this depravity. It is not enough, that we believe that there is such a thing as *holiness*: We ought to form a distinct idea of holiness, and know what is the *specific difference* between holiness and sin. These remarks will apply with force to the *law* of God, the *ground of obligation* in creatures to obey, the doctrine of *atonement, regeneration, &c.* On none of these fundamental points, ought we to content ourselves with vague, indistinct notions. It is by knowing the truth that we are to be made free. See Joh. viii. 32. The Saviour prayed for his disciples, that they might be sanctified through the truth. But surely we are not sanctified, merely by having the word of truth lie by us in our

houses: neither are we sanctified by knowing the names of the christian doctrines; nor can we be sanctified by erroneous and false views of these doctrines. Such views of gospel doctrines are represented in the scriptures, as tending to corrupt the mind, and to produce a most pernicious effect on the heart and life. It is the *very truth*, which tends to make us free. It is by loving and obeying the truth, that our hearts are purified. The importance of clear, definite, and correct sentiments about the fundamental truths of the gospel, is very great. A child ought not to be destitute of this: But it is utterly inexcusable, for those who have come to mature age, and who live in this land of Bibles and of Sabbaths, to be ignorant of "the first principles of the doctrine of Christ." But it is most of all inexcusable, and criminal, in the teachers of this religion, to be either ignorant or erroneous.

2. We would remark on the importance of the unlearned reader's being on his guard against receiving every learned criticism, on the mere credit of the critic. We would not despise all learned criticisms: but it would be very dangerous for the common reader to form his sentiments concerning any leading doctrine of the gospel, on the mere authority of some learned critic, who is acquainted with the Hebrew and Greek languages. Such a reader may generally satisfy himself concerning the correctness of a criticism, which affects a fundamental doctrine, without having recourse to any learned man, or to any book but the English Bible. Let us take for example *three* different criticisms, which are found in the book that has called forth the preceding Vindication. The *first* is found in the Letters, p. 32. It is Mr. Bangs' own criticism on Luke xxii. 22. There needs nothing to relieve the mind of the mere English scholar, only to compare his criticism with the passages in the other Evangelists, where the same thing is brought into view. The *second* example which I shall introduce, is Mr. Fletcher's criticism on Acts iv. 27, 28. It is found in the Letters, pp, 39, 40. This needs nothing to do away its force, only to be placed by the side of the second Psalm, from which the words in Acts were quoted. The *third* example shall be Dr. A. Clarke's criticism on Exod. iv. 21. This will be found in the Appendix to the Letters, pp. 305—306 The passage is concerning the Lord's *hardening* the heart of Pharaoh. After making some other observations on the text, Dr. C. says, "The verb *chazak*, which we translate harden, literally signifies to strengthen, confirm, make bold or courageous: and is often used in the sacred writings, to *excite to duty, perseverance*, &c." Now, tho' the common reader cannot dispute the learned critic, about the repeated application of this Hebrew word to an excitement to do good; yet common sense, unaided by literature, and unbiassed by pre-conceived opinions, can clearly discern, that the word is not used in such a sense in *this* place. All which follows in the ten succeeding chapters, is directly in opposition to the force of the criticism. Besides, the plain

unlettered christian, when he finds this case brought up by the apostle, cannot but see that *he* did not understand the Hebrew word, in the sense given in the criticism: but that he understood the *hardening* of Pharaoh, to be in contrast with his obtaining mercy. Rom. ix. 17, 18.

If the man of classical learning should by the force of criticism, take from his uneducated neighbor, all the texts which are considered as direct proof of any one of the essential doctrines of the gospel, the captive doctrine could be recovered back again, by discovering its intimate relation to the whole system of grace. Take for an illustration of this, the doctrine of *total depravity*. If all the texts, which are considered as the most direct proof of this doctrine, (such as Gen. vi. 5; Psal. xiv. Rom. iii.) should be forced away by criticism, when no learned advocate for the doctrine is at hand to grant relief, the christian, who can read the scriptures only in his own tongue can himself rescue it from the hand of the enemy. He will remember it is said, "They that are in the flesh, cannot please God." From this he with certainty infers, that they who are in the flesh, have *no holiness* in them. He finds that all men in their natural state are represented as refusing to accept of gospel offers. Hence he concludes, they are wholly opposed to God and holiness. He finds the promises of the gospel are made only to the converted, and yet that they are made to those who have love to God, repentance for sin, &c. without being limited by the degree of their strength. This reader, (we will suppose,) is fully established in a belief of the doctrine of *regeneration*, or of a change of heart: But he sees, that if he gives up the doctrine of total depravity, he must also give up the doctrine of regeneration. Unless therefore the critic can take away *all* his foundation *at once*, it will be difficult to take from him any one of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel.

3. There is one other remark of such great importance, that I dare not omit it. The remark is this: *If the doctrines, which have been vindicated in the preceding work, are true, we have great reason to fear, that if we do not love them, it is because we are in a state of unregeneracy.* They are either *essential doctrines*, or they are *capital errors*. If they are true, they are doctrines, which it must be very unsafe to reject. And yet they are doctrines, which we are greatly exposed to reject, because they are naturally unpalatable. This we know, without going from home to learn it. The same objections which we find in Mr. Bangs' book, and in other Arminian writings, we frequently hear from our neighbors, and from our own children; who have been instructed in nothing but the Calvinistic doctrines. Nay, we have made these very objections *ourselves*. We have seen our hearts rise in dreadful opposition against that God who made, and who governs the world according to his own pleasure, and for his own glory; and that according to an unalterable plan, which he laid in eternity. We have seen our

own hearts full of objections against totally depraved creatures' being required to perform holy actions, and that under the pain of eternal death. Our hearts have said, He that requires this, is a hard master, reaping where he has not sown. Our hearts have quarrelled with sovereign distinguishing grace, manifested in renewing one sinner in distinction from another: and our enmity has been drawn forth with peculiar strength, by a belief, that the distinction which is *now* made between sinners of the same character, was made in the *purpose* of God, before the foundation of the world. We ourselves are that clay, which has replied against the Potter, "Why hast thou made me thus?" "Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?" These objections against our own doctrines, are things with which we are but too *intimately* acquainted. But at the time, when we hope we passed from death unto life, we thought we became *reconciled* to these doctrines; and that we rejoiced in them, as clearly exhibiting the glory of God: and the strength of the hope which we have since entertained, of our having known the grace of God in truth, has been in proportion to the cordiality of our approbation of these views of God and divine things, in connexion with our external obedience. With our present views of christian doctrine, we should not entertain charity for ourselves, tho' our external attention to the duties of morality and piety were increased, if we did not at the same time think, that we could discover in our hearts a sweet approbation of the doctrines advocated in this Vindication. We are well aware, that no attachment to a system of doctrines, which does not lead to holy practice, is to be depended on: nor dare we make dependence on any external obedience, however strict, which does not flow from an inward *love* of the *truth*.

Here is a fact which ought to be seriously considered.—The unconverted of our own congregations, evidently incline to Arminian sentiments: but when they appear to be converted from prayerless men, into men of serious godliness, it is a common thing for them, to embrace Calvinistic sentiments, acknowledging that all their former ground of opposition to them, was a proud and wicked heart. I would now ask, whether it be a common thing for the children of Methodists, and other Arminians, to incline to Calvinistic sentiments before their conversion? Is there not in this respect a manifest difference? And is not this a thing, which ought to arrest the attention, and excite the deepest thought in the minds of those who are our opponents in this controversy?

I am now just about to drop my pen and close the present work. But before I do this, I feel constrained to address a word to my readers of the Methodist connexion, if any such readers I shall have. I know, the Searcher of hearts has been a witness of all that I have written. I have not knowingly uttered a word of reproach for the sake of reviling you, consider-

ed as a people; or for the sake of injuring the feelings of your brother, who is my particular antagonist in this controversy. His salvation and yours are of great worth, and ought to lie near my heart, like my own salvation, and that of my own people. And how can I close, without reminding you; that if you were of our own denomination, and of our own families, and made such opposition to what we esteem to be fundamental truths of the gospel, we could not but say "we stand in doubt of you."

A SERMON

ON THE GOODNESS OF GOD, MANIFESTED IN GOVERNING THE HEARTS OF HIS ENEMIES.*

Ezra vii. 27.

Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem.

THESE are the words of Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven. The connexion between the text and the context will come into view, under some of the following divisions of the subject. I. We shall inquire into the character of this king. II. It will be shown what he did to beautify the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. III. It will be next in order, to show that it was the God of Israel who put this thing into the king's heart. IV. It will then be proper to notice the feelings which Ezra entertained towards the God of his fathers, in view of the part which He acted in this important affair.

I. Our first inquiry is concerning the character of the king, who is spoken of in the text. The name which the inspired writer gives to this king, is Artax-

* This subject is touched upon in the first section of the preceding work: but as Mr. B. made the matter concerning *divine efficiency*, a very *capital* objection to our scheme of doctrine; and as there are many among *Calvinists*, who do not appear to have equally clear views on this, as on other points of doctrine, it was thought it would not be improper, and that it might be subservient to the cause of truth, to subjoin the following Sermon to the preceding Vindication.

erxes. He was one of the kings of Persia. This was a heathen kingdom, and they doubtless had a heathen prince. I conclude that none of us has obtained an idea, that Artaxerxes was *a man of grace.* There is nothing in sacred or profane history, to lead to the conclusion, that he had been born of the Spirit. And if he was not born of the Spirit, he was never actuated by a holy motive in any thing which he ever did. If he was not a real saint, he was a real sinner. If he did not possess holy love to God, he must have been possessed of nothing better than a carnal mind, which is enmity against God. "They who are in the flesh," (i. e. in a state of unregeneracy) "cannot please God." "Without faith," (even that faith which worketh by love,) "it is impossible to please Him."

II. It will be shown what this Persian king did to beautify to house of the Lord at Jerusalem. The second temple had been finished, and dedicated in the reign of one of his predecessors; but it still needed much improving and beautifying. The Jews were still in a low and dejected state, and needed help. Artaxerxes helped them much. He turned his attention very directly to their religious state, and granted them such aid as they needed to enable them to maintain the worship of the God of heaven. More money was then needed, to set up and maintain divine worship, than under the present dispensation. And money for this object, was by this monarch very liberally bestowed. He threw open his treasuries to the subjugated and despised people of the God of Israel. He exempted all the ministers of the house of God from taxation. He furnished them with sacrifices and offerings in great abundance, for the temple worship. In addition to all this, he sent them the best man which he had in his kingdom—the man whom they most needed; and who mightily helped forward the re-establishment of the captive church. I proceed

III. To show, that it was the God of Israel, who put this thing in the king's heart. So says the inspired scribe of the law of God: *Blessed be the God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart.* It is important that we carefully inquire what is to be understood by *God's* putting this thing in the

king's heart. It ought undoubtedly to be understood, that God did every thing which it was consistent for Him to do. Much of the property of the high Possessor of heaven and earth, was at this time in the hands and at the disposal of the Persian monarch. This wealth of the sinner was laid up for the just. The way which now seemed good to the God of Jacob to take, to draw the silver and the gold from the treasuries of this heathen kingdom, into his own treasury, with a view to beautify his house at Jerusalem, was to incline the heart of the reigning monarch to do it as a matter of bounty. The Almighty could have wrested this treasure out of his hands without his consent. But He chose rather to make him willing to bestow it of his own accord. Therefore He *put this thing in the king's heart*, to beautify the house of the Lord at Jerusalem. This must be understood to mean,

First, That God so ordained things in his providence, that the motives which influenced the king to do this, should be presented to his mind. Artaxerxes did not act without motives. No moral agent acts without a motive, in any thing which he does. To move without motive, is the motion of a machine, and not of a free agent. Every rational being, whether holy or sinful, when he acts, proposes to himself some object. This object is the motive which influences him to act in such a manner as he does. One motive leads to one action, and another motive leads to another action. According to the perfect counsel of the Most High, He has *a way* devised to bring to pass all that which He designs should be brought to pass. He has a motive planned out, which will be successful in bringing into existence every moral action which is ever to exist. The king of Persia had a motive for laying out so much expense on the worship of the God of Israel. His governing motive is perhaps found in this verse: "Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven; *for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?*" A fear of God's wrath and not a love of his unspotted holiness, was the thing which probably induced this heathen prince, to beautify his holy temple, and grant relief to his afflicted people. The provi-

dence of God was concerned, in placing this motive before his mind. Whatever were the means used to excite a dread of the wrath of Jehovah, the God whom the pious Jews adored, Ezra was disposed to acknowledge the *divine hand* in presenting the motive. Had not the great Disposer of events presented this, or some other sufficient motive, to his mind, the thing which he did would not have been done.

Secondly. The Lord's putting it in the king's heart, to beautify his house at Jerusalem, must be understood to mean, that He *directly inclined* his heart to do this thing. That so much must be understood will appear by attending to the following arguments. 1st. This was necessary to his acting *at all*; for there is no independent action in a dependent creature. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God." 2 Cor. iii. 5. 2dly. This was necessary to insure his acting in *this particular manner*, so as to accomplish this most desirable object. Other kings upon the same throne had treated the Jews in a very different manner. The same motives for the same treatment still existed. One of the kings, in issuing his decree, to hinder them from rebuilding their city and temple, says, "Why should damage grow to the hurt of the king?" This king's heart was no better, and yet he helps the Jews, saying, "For why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?" The motives were both selfish; but it was far from being a matter of indifference to the cause of God, which of these motives should influence *Artaxerxes*. Such a matter it would have been unwise to have left to chance; and there was no way to take it out of the hands of chance, only for God to direct his heart into such a channel as it pleased Him. It was He who inclined the heart of this king, to be governed by motives which were favorable to his people. In this way we are to account for his issuing a favorable, instead of an unfavorable decree—*God put it in his heart*:—He inclined or disposed his heart to do this thing. In this way also we are to account for it, that he did just so much as he did. The Lord needed just so much done by this heathen prince, to restore his sinking church. Now if the motive, of avoiding the wrath

of Israel's God, without any direct agency on the heart, would account for a decree in favor of Israel, still it would not make it certain that just so much would be given, as the exigency now required. But if the king's heart was in the hand of the Lord, so that he could turn it whithersoever he would, then he could, not only make him give, but also make him give as much as his people needed.

3dly. The Lord's putting the thing in the king's heart, must include as much as what has been stated, else unsanctified men would do good, more independently of God than the saints. There is a passage, 2 Cor. viii. 16, which is similar to the text, "But thanks be to God which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you." Is it not a general belief among us, that God did something more than to present a motive to the mind of Titus? Was not his heart the seat of *divine operation?* Did not God by his invisible agency move upon the heart of Titus, to cause him to exercise an earnest care for the church at Corinth? And did not the same God move upon, and incline the heart of the Persian monarch, to lay himself out to beautify the temple of Jerusalem? Can heathen princes do good to Zion, more independently than the children of Zion? When these do good, it is God who works in them both to *will* and to *do*. He is to have the glory of disposing their hearts to do good. Thus David viewed it, when he and his people made their liberal and willing offering, for the building of the first temple. He viewed himself indebted to God for the offering, and also for the heart with which to give it. Was not this just as true in application to what Artaxerxes did for the second temple? What he gave was the Lord's, and it was of the Lord that he had a heart to give it. We are now prepared,

IV. To take notice of the feelings which Ezra entertained towards the God of his fathers, in view of the part which He acted in this important affair. What the Most High did in this affair, was evidently the means of brightening, and exalting his character, in the view of this good man. He was filled with a grateful sense of the divine goodness. With a heart full of gratitude, he exclaims, *Blessed be the Lord God of our*

fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart. If the king had been actuated by a holy zeal for the honor of the true God, *he* would have deserved esteem and thanks. But this would not have diminished aught of the glory due to God, who, in this case should have been praised for giving him this holy zeal. If the king had no real disinterested regard for the church, (which is the supposition we have gone upon,) still the God of Israel was no less worthy of being praised; for it is certain that He loved his church, and that in the exercise of love He inclined this heathen monarch, to help it forward when it was in a low state. In this view of the matter, Ezra, this discerning scribe who was instructed to the kingdom of heaven, was prepared to bless, and praise the God of his fathers, because he had put such a thing as this in the king's heart.

The divine agency, which was very apparent in this matter, served to impress upon the mind of this pious instructor in Israel, the perfect supremacy of Israel's God. He was now in a kingdom where the true God was not acknowledged; but he saw, to a demonstration, that the kings of Persia were as perfectly under the control of Israel's God, as the kings of Israel. He saw that their hearts were in the hand of the God of his fathers, and were turned at his pleasure. It no doubt impressed this pleasing truth upon his mind, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." It was calculated to make this declaration appear true: "And he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth."

The view which Ezra had of the merciful agency of God, displayed in his inclining the Persian king, to do so much for the prosperity of the church, served as a stimulous to him. He may be supposed to have reasoned thus; "If the God of our fathers, in remembrance of his covenanted mercy, is inclining the hearts of heathen princes who are his enemies, to pity us, and to issue proclamations in our favor, and bestow much of their treasure upon us, how does it become *us*, his *chosen people*, to be devoted to his service." This good man felt, that God had laid him under peculiar obligation to be devoted to the good cause, by putting it into

the king's heart to give him a commission, with such ample powers of exerting himself to revive the sinking church. The good of the church lay near his heart, and the more he saw the power and mercy of God manifested, in causing even "the earth to help the woman," the more was he stimulated to holy activity.

IMPROVEMENT.

From the case which we have considered, we learn, *That the friends of God, when they rightly understand the matter, are pleased that He governs the hearts, even of his enemies.* Ezra was one of the choisest friends of the living and true God: And he had adoring views of Jehovah, because He had put such a thing into the king's heart—because He had influenced and inclined his heart to make this liberal offering to the house of God. His joy was not abated, nor was his confidence in the goodness of the divine character in the least degree shaken, by any doubt arising in his mind, whether it was consistent for God to operate on the heart of a graceless man. It has been taken for granted, that this heathen prince had an unregenerate heart. If so, all his volitions were evil, for the wickedness of man in his unregeneracy is so great, that *every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually.* [Gen. vi. 5] If he had not been recovered by special grace, from the entire depravity of his nature, the great Searcher of hearts saw nothing in all his costly offerings to his sanctuary, which in any degree delighted Him. He saw that all his motives were wholly selfish; that he had none of that faith, without which it is impossible to please God, and none of that preferring of Jerusalem to his chief joy, without which, all that is done for the building up of the holy city, is totally unacceptable to the great King. And yet Ezra viewed the God of his fathers as moving, and inclining the wicked heart which was evil only and continually, without feeling at all displeased with Him on this account. He did not say, 'God cannot be good, if He moves upon the heart of a wicked man,—if He is the efficient, or effectuating cause of sinful exercises.' No, he blessed and praised

the God of heaven, for being the efficient cause of these exercises, without waiting to know that they were holy, as they existed in the heart of the king. If he had been infallibly assured, that Artaxerxes had no disinterested motive in doing what he did, it would not have altered his feelings towards the Lord his God: It would not have abated his love, nor prevented his giving thanks. If he knew, that Artaxerxes did not grant this aid to the afflicted Jews, from any unfeigned love to them, or to the God whom they worshipped, but from motives which were wholly selfish, he must feel very differently towards him, from what he would have done, if he had believed him to do it heartily to the Lord: But as coming from God, it made no difference; for whatever instrument He used to bestow the benefit, whether benevolent, or selfish, the goodness of *His* motive in bestowing, could not for a moment be doubted.—God is good, and *the goodness of God endureth continually.*

Some of my readers may think, that the reason why Ezra was not perplexed with the idea, of God's being the efficient cause of sinful exercises in the heart of the Persian king, was owing to his not pausing to consider the consequences of such a sentiment. Perhaps he did not think, some will say, that this implied, That *the holy God was the efficient cause of moral evil.*

Let us pause then, and consider the consequences;—let us see if there be any thing in this sentiment, which will not bear serious thought and investigation. There are but two difficulties that I know of, which are supposed to attend this subject. The *first* is this; How can God cause these exercises, and yet they be the exercises of another being, and that other being be accountable for them? The *second* difficulty attending the subject, is this; That it seems to impeach the *character* of God, to suppose Him to be the efficient cause of *sinful* exercises. To the *first* difficulty it may be replied:

1. That with God all things are possible. His wisdom and power infinitely transcend the wisdom and power of creatures. It is not among the *possibles*, to make contradictions harmonize. It is not because the power of the Almighty is in the least degree limited,

that he cannot perform contradictions. It is not an object of power, to cause a thing to be, and not to be, at the same time. No increase of power has the least tendency to produce this contradiction. But every thing which is not absolutely contradictious, can be effected by Him who alone doeth wonders. God cannot make vegetables and stones into moral agents, they still remaining vegetables and stones. But it is undoubtedly within the compass of the skill and power of the all-wise Creator, to form a free moral agent. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with us, that God should bring into existence an *intelligent* being, who should be dependent on Him for his *knowledge*; and a *voluntary* agent, who should be dependent for his *volitions?*—— What less than this can be meant by his making men after his own image and likeness? Does it not mean, that He brought man into existence an *intelligent* being, and that with a *character?* But surely, in the first instance, he must have been dependent on his Creator, both for his intelligence, and his character.—— Yet it was *his* intelligence, and *his* character. It was Adam who *knew*, and who *loved* his Creator. If he could commence his existence with a character, for which he must of necessity be entirely dependent, there is no absurdity in supposing, that he should continue to be dependent for his character during the whole period of his existence. But to this difficulty we reply,

2. That it is a point which has been understood, and generally consented to, by the people of God from the beginning; That God does work in *their* hearts to *will*;——that all the holy exercises and desires of their hearts are caused by Him: Yet they have always understood it; yea, they have been conscious of it, that these exercises and desires were their own. They know that while it is God, who has granted them repentance unto life, it is they who have repented. They know that tho' faith is the gift of God, it is they who have believed; and that tho' the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, it is they who love. They know that it is they who pray; and yet they all confess their dependence on Him to whom they pray, to prepare their hearts. The harmony be-

tween their dependence, and their moral liberty, is perfectly familiar to them. Whether they can satisfy a logician or not, they are themselves satisfied.

Now, merely as the subject of *agency* is concerned, there is no more difficulty, in supposing sinful creatures entirely dependent on God for all the exercises of their hearts, than in supposing holy creatures to be thus dependent. The difficulty, which we are now seeking to remove, is this: How can God be the efficient cause of the exercises of wicked men, and yet the exercises be *their own*, and they be accountable for them? This difficulty must immediately vanish, in the view of those who believe, that God is the efficient cause of the exercises of *good men*, and yet that these exercises are their own, and that they are rendered amiable and praise-worthy on their account.* If it be understood, how the repentance, faith, love, and new obedience of the righteous, are their own, tho' the fruit of divine operation; there is no more difficulty in understanding how the impenitence, unbelief and enmity of the wicked, should be their own, even if God

* The dependence of the saints on the Divine Sanctifier, is one reason which the scripture assigns, why they should not *boast*, and why they should feel *thankful*, but it is never assigned as a reason why they should not consider themselves as possessing a *real excellence* of character. The saints which are in the earth, are said to be the excellent, and those who are to be delighted in. Christ will bear witness to their excellency of character in the great day, when he will say to them, "*Well done*, good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord." The saints are never considered as any the *less* excellent and amiable, because they are dependent on divine operation for that excellence. Their dependence on God for their faith and good works, is not the reason they are not justified by their own works, according to the tenor of the law: but it is because they have not a perfection of good works;—they have not continued in all things written in the book of the law to do them. The infinite amiableness of the Divine Being does not arise from the *independence* of his holiness, but from the very *nature* of it. If it were possible for Him to possess as much dependent holiness, as the holiness which he now possesses, independently of all other beings, He would be worthy of just as much *love* from us, tho' not as much *confidence*, and *trust*, as He now claims. The idea is this, That the amiableness of character, depends on its *nature*, separately from the consideration, that it is *dependent*, or *independent*.

operates on their hearts, so as to be the efficient cause of these exercises. I am persuaded, that the great body of believers will by no means give up the idea, that they are dependent upon God to work in them *to will*, as well as *to do*: neither will they give up the idea, that it is *they themselves* who will and do. Then they must acknowledge, that the difficulty now under consideration, is removed out of the way. *Sinners* can be as dependent as *they* are, and at the same time be as free.

Let us now pay some attention to the *other* difficulty which was supposed to attend this subject. The difficulty is this: That it seems to impeach the *character* of God, to view him as the efficient cause of *sinful* exercises. How can God be holy, and produce unholy exercises in the hearts of his creatures? This undoubtedly is the point where the subject most labors;—— How can God be holy, and at the same time absolutely govern the hearts of wicked men? But let me ask; Does it, in the view of any of us, tend to impeach the divine character, to be told, that "the Lord *stirred up* the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia," to rebuild the holy city and the temple, tho' we at the same time consider Cyrus to be nothing better than a graceless man? Or does it lower down our views of divine holiness, to know; that it was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who put it in the heart of Artaxerxes to beautify his house at Jerusalem? If by the phrase, *putting it in his heart*, we understand, that God not only presented motives, but efficiently moved his heart to confer all this good upon his people, as much as he moves the hearts of his saints to do good;—even then will it sink the divine character in our view? Does it tend to injure the spotless holiness of the Divine Being, in the view of one of my readers, to hear it said, that He has *inclined* the hearts of many, both of saints and *sinners*, to contribute of their substance to help forward the spread of the glorious gospel? Is it wrong to say, the Lord has inclined the hearts of the two contending nations to be at peace? If we knew that those who concluded the treaty of peace, were governed only by selfish motives, would it injure the character of the Su-

preme Ruler, to say, that *He inclined* their hearts to peace ?*

You are prepared to answer *no*, to all these questions. The statements made are attended with no difficulty, you will say ; for in all these cases, God is represented as inclining men to *do good*. Here let me ask, What is meant by *doing good ?* for according to the cases stated, the agents whom God inclined, were not *good*, (in a holy sense,) neither before, nor after he inclined them. There was no moral or spiritual good in them, or in their actions. On the contrary, according to the supposition made, there was nothing but sin. When you say therefore, that the agents did good, you cannot intend *moral good* or *holiness*, for this they did not do. It must then be *natural good*, which you intend, when you say, *they did good*. They did that, without a holy motive, which was *beneficial* and *advantageous*. Cyrus, in restoring the captive Jews, did that which was good, or advantageous to them. And the God of Israel in stirring up his spirit to do this, conferred a great blessing on his people. Artaxerxes did the chosen people a great favor, in sending them such an excellent scribe of the law of God as Ezra, vested with such authority, and enriched with such sums of money, to be expended for the honor of Jehovah, and the upbuilding of his church. Those impenitent sinners who place money in the missionary funds, are instrumental in sending the light of the gospel to the dark corners of the earth, which is the greatest blessing that can be sent to them. And they who have concluded the late treaty of peace, whether their hearts have been right with God or not, have conferred a great benefit on the two nations, which were destroying each others lives and property.

Is this then the thing which makes the Almighty appear glorious, in moving upon the hearts of wicked men, (they remaining wicked,) namely, that He stirs them up to *benefit* his church, and to benefit mankind : or, in other words, that He stirs them up to do *good*, instead of doing mischief ? Yes verily, you will say ;

* This Discourse was delivered in the Spring of 1815; soon after the ratification of the late treaty of peace between Great-Britain, and the United States of America.

This relieves the difficulty ;——God appears glorious in stirring them up to do good, tho' *they* do not seek that good, which He seeks to promote by them. Tho' their hearts are not good, yet His heart is good: and since good is all the object which He has in view, the evil all rests with them ; none of it attaches to Him, to obscure the glory of his holiness.

But what if God had put it into the heart of Cyrus and of Artaxerxes, to *hate* his people ; would it be proper for us to hate Him on this account? If this would not imply a hateful and malicious spirit in God, He ought not to be hated for doing it. In the tenth chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, the Lord threatens that He would *send* (that is, incline or dispose) the king of Assyria to go to Jerusalem, to bring *evil* upon that city *. Does the character of Jehovah suffer any more in our view, than tho' He had sent him thither with a rich offering for his holy temple?

It appears by the divine record,† that God as much raised up Nebuchadnezzar to captivate the Jews, and burn Jerusalem and the temple, as he raised up Cyrus and other Persian monarchs, to let them go free, and to grant them help in rebuilding their city and temple. And He had the same holy object in view in both cases. We have supposed, (and the supposition is not improbable,) that there was no holiness, no disinterested love, either in the captors or restorers of the chosen people ; —none of them sought the glory of God, nor the spiritual prosperity of the holy nation: but God made use of them all, both captors and restorers, to promote his glory in furthering the interests of his kingdom on earth. The well-being of the church made it as necessary that the holy city should be burned by Nebuchadnezzar, as that it should be rebuilt by Cyrus. The first we call an *evil*, an *affliction ;* the other we denomi-

* There are some who will not suspect Mr. Poole of heterodoxy on this point, who perhaps would entertain fears of the author of this sermon. Such are referred to Poole's annotation on these words, "I will send him." "Not by express commission," says Mr. P. "but by the secret, yet powerful conduct of my providence, giving him both occasion, and *inclination* to this expedition."

† Jer. xxv. 8—11.

nate a *good*, a *blessing*: But how often has the Church found by experience, that it was good that she had been afflicted, because it had brought her from going astray, to learn to keep the statutes of her God. All things, not excepting the sorest troubles, work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose.

If we can be reconciled to the idea of a divine agency on the hearts of the impenitent, when they do that which is *beneficial*; but cannot be reconciled to it, when they do that which is *hurtful*: we might for the same reason oppose a divine agency in whirlwinds and destructive storms, and acknowledge it only in gentle gales and refreshing showers. But we have the testimony of God himself, that the "*stormy* wind fulfils his word." Psal. cxlviii. 8. The gentle gale wafts along our ship, and the stormy wind sinks it in the deep; but we all unite in ascribing both to the agency of the same benevolent being. Nebuchadnezzar burns the temple, and Cyrus rebuilds it: and why shall we not ascribe both to the agency of God? If it should be said, 'There is a vast disparity between *winds*, and *wickedness*;'—— we acknowledge it: but there is no more difference between *beneficial* wickedness, and *mischievous* wickedness, than between a useful, and destructive wind. If we have become reconciled to the agency of God, in the selfish volitions of Artaxerxes, and others, because those selfish volitions led them into a course, which was very beneficial to the interests of religion, I do not see why we may not be reconciled to His agency in those selfish volitions, which lead them to do that which is immediately hurtful; as well as be reconciled to his agency in storms which are destructive to property and lives. If it be the *character of the exercises* which possess the sinner's heart, that creates the difficulty, in ascribing them to divine agency, it is as great in the one case as in the other; for when a graceless man does that which is useful, and when he does that which is hurtful, he is the same man, possessed of one and the same character But if it be not the character of the exercises which creates the difficulty, but the *pernicious effect* which some of these exercises produce, then there will be precisely the same ground for objecting

against a divine agency in destructive storms, as in destructive wickedness; for the *immediate* effect in both cases is *evil*. And if a firm belief, that God will make use of destructive storms, to unfold his glory, and promote the good of his church, is enough to reconcile us to his agency in these storms; then a firm belief, that all the wrath of man will praise Him, and turn out to the furtherance of the gospel, is enough to lay a foundation for us to be reconciled to His agency in bringing all this wrath of man into existence. It is enough to lay a foundation for us to be reconciled to His turning the heart of the Egyptians to hate his people,* and His hardening the heart of their king, that he should not let the people go †. It is enough to lay a foundation for us to be reconciled to such a passage as Deut. ii. 30; "But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him: for the Lord thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand, as appeareth this day:" And to such a passage as that, Josh. xi. 20; "For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle." Yea, if all the wrath of man will be made to promote the glory of God, then there is a foundation laid for us to be reconciled to that more comprehensive declaration, *And whom He will He hardeneth*. Rom. ix. 18.

But some of my readers will be ready to ask; 'Why, if this matter is so capable of being reconciled, are so many good men unwilling to adopt the sentiment; that there is a divine agency employed in bringing into existence the moral actions of sinful creatures?' To this interesting question it may be replied;

1. That many have incautiously adopted this false axiom, *That the cause must be like the effect*. The cause, it is true, must be adequate to produce the effect; but it is by no means necessary, that there should be any resemblance of nature between the cause and the effect. It must be an *intelligent* being to produce *unintelligent* and inert matter. Here the effect does not at all partake of the nature of the cause. So a *holy* being may form one that is *unholy*. He must have a holy end in

* Psal. cxiv. 25. † Exod. iv. 21.

doing it, or he would resemble the being which he had made. The Persians supposed two supreme beings; the one the cause of all the good, and the other the cause of all the evil: but Jehovah, in opposition to this false sentiment, declares; "There is none besides me, I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." Isa. xlv. 6, 7. There are some effects, which necessarily partake of the nature of their cause. The stream, which is poured forth by a fountain, is of necessity like its parent fountain.—So the actions which proceed from our hearts, are of the same nature with our hearts. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil. There is no doubt but that much of the darkness, which has rested on this subject, has arisen from not making a distinction between *fontal*, and *efficient* cause.* "God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all;" therefore darkness cannot proceed from Him, as from its fountain: but He can "create the darkness." God is good, perfectly, yea, infinitely good; therefore evil cannot *flow* from Him; but He can "create evil."† The vo-

* I do not know, as the Dictionaries will sanction my use of the word *fontal*; and yet I am confident that it is not a word of my own coining. It is derived from the Latin substantive, *fons, fontis*, a fountain. God is the efficient, or effectuating cause of water's flowing from a spring; and yet God is not, literally, the fountain, whence that water flows. So God is the *efficient* cause of the volitions, which are now flowing out my heart. If it were not for His agency I could have no volitions: and yet it would be improper to say, that he is the *fontal cause* of these volitions. They flow forth from *my* heart, as their proper source or fountain; but they do not flow forth from the heart of God. He *worketh* in me to will, therefore I say that He is the *efficient* cause of my volitions; but as these volitions exist only in my heart, and not in His, I would say, that God is not the *fontal*, tho' He is the *efficient* cause of my volitions.

† As God cannot be the *fontal* cause of sin, I think it not proper to say, that He is the *Author* of sin. This word, I am inclined to think, in its most proper sense, implies, that the thing effected is not only pleasing to the efficient cause, in its ultimate design and use, but in itself considered. In this sense

litions and actions of *men*, are not the volitions and actions of the First Cause, tho' it is true that they are dependent on Him; for He worketh in them both to will and to do.

2. There are many friends of the Redeemer, who are ready to say;—"We thought *holiness* was in the scriptures ascribed to *God*, and *sin*, to *wicked* men and the *devil*,—how then can God be considered as the efficient cause of sin?" To this it may be replied, 1st. There is nothing but holiness in God. He is emphatically, THE HOLY ONE. His nature is perfect holiness, and all his designs are benevolent. He has no such unholy volitions as those, of which devils and wicked men are the subjects. 2dly. Holiness is the only thing in the character of creatures, which has any resemblance to the character of the Creator. Therefore it is holy creatures alone, who are said to be created after the image of God. Thus Adam was created at first, and thus believers are new created by grace. [See Gen. i. 26, and Eph. iv. 24.] Wicked men are not like God their Creator, but like their father the devil: therefore they are said to be not of God, but of the devil. 3dly. Holiness is the only thing in creatures which renders them amiable in the sight of God. The Holy One has no complacence in any creature, on ac-

we know, the word, *author* is used when applied to the writer of a book. We also apply the term to any good or evil contrived by men, in such a way as to connect the character of the contriver with the thing contrived. If we speak of any one as the author of some wicked plot, we give the idea, that this wicked plot was just such a thing as the author of it loved. It is evident that the translators of the Bible had this idea of the word, *author*, in rendering 1 Cor. xiv. 33; *But God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.* The word, *author*, is supplied by the translators, there being no word in the Greek text which answers to it. But it is evident, that the sense required some word to be supplied, and the translators thought this to be a proper one. The text, as it is in the original language, obviously teaches, that there is a sense in which confusion cannot be predicated of God, as peace can be. And I do not feel disposed to object to the word which they have used; therefore I do not say, that God is the Author of sin. Others, no doubt, use this word when by *author* they mean no more than *efficient cause.*

count of his rational nature; or even because he is the work of his own hands. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, (that is, with complacence,) and cannot look upon iniquity. Hab. i. 13. In this respect He differs entirely from Satan and wicked men. They do not abhor evil. It is the *wickedness* of their character, which lays a foundation for all that unholy fellowship which subsists among them. 4thly. The *promotion of holiness* in the created system, is the thing, to which the Creator makes all things in nature and providence conspire. He created rational minds that they might be capable of holy affections. He made the heavens and all the works of creation, to declare his glory, that his rational offspring might be acquainted with his holy character, that they might love it, and be conformed to it. His law requires holiness, even to perfection. It prohibits nothing but *sinful* affections and conduct: it is against these alone that all its threatenings are pointed. The manifest design of the coming of the Saviour, was to set up *a kingdom of holiness* in this depraved world. His teaching was, every word of it, in favor of holiness: and his life was as holy as his doctrine. There was none of his enemies who could convince him of sin. The death of the Saviour speaks most unequivocally, and audibly, in favor of holiness. His salvation is from sin unto holiness. Revealed truth is designed to promote holiness: for the church is sanctified through the truth. Afflictions are designed to promote the same important object. God is said to chasten his children for their profit, that they might be partakers of his holiness. All the wickedness in the universe is designed to increase the quantity of holiness and blessedness. It is in this way, that the wrath of man, and all the sin in the universe, will be made to praise God. He never purposed, nor brought into existence the least degree of moral evil, because He delighted in the evil: But holiness He delights in, and he will make all things work together, (and sin among the rest,) to increase the quantity of it in the created system.

Will not the preceding observations prepare the way for us, to understand how it is; that the scriptures ascribe holiness to God, while they ascribe sin to wick-

ed men and devils. Wicked men and fallen angels are themselves sinners. Their exercises of heart are all evil. They stand perfectly opposed to holiness. This is the thing in God which they hate: It is this thing in their fellow creatures which draws out their enmity. When the scripture speaks of Cain's murder of Abel, it demands, "Wherefore slew he him? because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." If sinful creatures were armed with sufficient power, they would utterly demolish the kingdom of holiness. When the scriptures speak of the *commission* of sin, it is ascribed to wicked agents exclusively, as none others *commit* iniquity: And when any thing is done to bring it into existence, with an *ultimate* view to build up the kingdom of wickedness, and to crush, or depress the kingdom of righteousness, this also is ascribed to wicked agents. The most holy, and the most unholy agent in the universe, are repeatedly represented as being engaged to bring to pass the same thing. Take the case of David's sin in numbering Israel. The same unerring Spirit of inspiration declares, that the Lord moved David to this, and that Satan provoked him to it. [See 2 Sam. xxiv. 1, compared with 1 Chron. xxi. 1.] The same is true concerning the crucifixion of the Saviour: Satan put it into the heart of Judas to betray, and of the unbelieving Jews, to crucify him; but this very thing God also determined, and brought to pass. Satan and wicked men are represented as concerned in these matters, as far as wickedness and mischief are the object proposed, but the agency of God is bro't into view, only as the promotion of good is the chief end.*

* If we were to represent the infinite God as having the least hand in wickedness, in the same sense which Satan has, we should justly stand charged with blaspheming his holy name. We should be guilty of the sin against which the apostle James cautions us in his epistle, chap. i. ver. 13: *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.* In this text we are taught, 1. That God is not a sinful, but a holy Being. 2. That temptation to sin can take no hold of Him. Adam and Eve were, when first created, holy beings; but they were not incapable of being tempted with evil. But this text is designed to teach us, that our Creator is not only now a holy Being, but that He is immutably holy; so that no temptation to sin can make the least possible impression on his infinitely pure mind. 3. In this text we are taught that God cannot act the part of a tempter to sin. The proper idea of a *tempter*, is one who favors sin himself, and seeks to lead others to favor it; therefore he uses arguments with a view to do away the evil, or the danger of transgression. When God is said to have tempted Abraham, it means no such thing; but the proper idea of tempting, implies that we take the side of sin, and that we are gratified when we can get others to join with us. In this sense, God tempteth no man. He never takes the side

But it may still be said, That the minds of good people will not be satisfied with all which has been urged in favor of the doctrine of a *divine* efficiency on the hearts of evil men, because that they are all taught to pray, that truth and holiness may spring up and flourish in the earth, by means of the shedding down of the Holy Spirit: And these prayers, it will be said, go on the ground, that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to produce holy, but not to produce unholy affections. To this difficulty it may be replied: In the infinitely important affair of man's redemption, each Person of the Godhead has an office work. It is the office work of the Holy Ghost to renew and sanctify the sinner's heart, and prepare him for glory; but it is not his office work to harden the impenitent sinner, and fit him for destruction. But it does not hence follow, that the impenitent sinner commits wickedness, any more independently of God, than the subjects of gracious divine operation exercise repentance, and the other christian graces, independently of Him. Christ, in his office work as the Redeemer, does not at present reign over all the earth. His kingdom is extending; and time is drawing near when He will take to him his great power, and reign over all the earth. But the Son, even now, in union with the Father and the Holy Ghost, exercises a universal dominion over all the earth, and over the dark world of hell, and over all the created universe. In like manner, without any reference to office work in the covenant of redemption, it may be said, that *God* is the universal Agent, having the hearts of kings and of all their subjects in his hand, so that he can, and does turn them at His pleasure. But when the heart of any rebel is turned unto God, either in the first instance, or by increasing sanctification, it is peculiarly ascribed to the Holy Spirit, as his office work; or to the whole Trinity, as "the God of all grace."

But some will say, Is there no difficulty in praying for divine operation, as a *peculiar favor*, if we are already the subjects of a divine operation, even while we are hardening in sin? I do not see any thing more contradictory in this, than there is in praying to God for showers, to water and fertilize the earth, when it is He himself who is sending a drought to make it

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of sin, but always that of holiness. In this alone He rejoices. As to *favoring sin*, God has *nothing* to do with it. He did not favor the sinful motive which led the Persian king who is spoken of in the text, to beautify his house at Jerusalem: but there was nothing of the nature of tempting or enticing to sin, in His *putting it in the king's heart* to do this; even if by this phrase we understand, that He directly inclined his heart to do it. God sent Joseph into Egypt; and to this end He put it in the hearts of his brethren, to sell him to the Ishmaelites; but in this he did not act the part of a tempter;—He did nothing which gives the least ground of suspicion, that He favored their envy and malice. The patriarch said to his brethren, "Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good."

barren: or any more, than to pray to God for peace, with a full belief, that it is He who has sent the calamity of war: or any more, than for a sick man to pray, that the Lord would undertake for him and restore him to health, when it is acknowledged, that it is the hand of the Lord which has brought him on the bed of sickness. "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up." 1 Sam. ii. 6.

Some may perhaps wish to know, whether those, who believe in a universal divine agency, hold that the *manner* of operating is the same on the hearts of the good, and of the evil. To such an inquiry we would answer; That we can form no conception of the *mode* of *Divine operation*. We know that the Almighty has power to cause things to come into existence, and to operate upon, and move them, after they exist; But in what *manner* a Being, who is purely spiritual, operates to originate a creation, or to move and control it, after it is brought into existence, we know not. This we know, that *our God is in the heavens, and that He hath done whatever He pleased*, as to the creation and government of the world. He makes summer and winter, heat and cold; and we can perceive that He makes use of different means to produce these changes: But we can form no idea of the difference in the *mode* of *divine operation* in producing such contrary effects as heat and cold. This thing lies beyond our ken, and is one of those secret things which belong not to us, but to the Lord our God.

Having paid some attention to the difficulties, which appear to exist in the minds of good men, on the subject of a universal divine agency, I will now suggest two or three things, which have a tendency to make such characters *relish* this doctrine. It was said in the commencement of the Improvement of this Discourse, *That the friends of God, when they rightly understand the matter, are pleased that He governs the hearts, even of his enemies*. The following things, which grow out of the doctrine, are evidently calculated to please all the friends of God.

First. A belief in this sentiment, lays a foundation for them to thank the Lord, for all the favors which they receive from unsanctified men, and for all the good which such men are the means of effecting. It is the nature of piety to lead us so to acknowledge God, as the Author of all our blessings, as in every thing to give Him the thanks. If our blessings come from the earth, true piety will lead us to remember, that "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." We shall remember that it is He, who *causeth* the grass to grow, and who causeth all the productions of the ground to spring up, and ripen for the use of man. We shall, if we are godly, be none the less thankful to our Heavenly Father, for giving us these blessings by means of the earth, than though He had created them for us independently of the productive power of the earth; for He not only made the earth, but it is He who causeth it to produce all its harvests. If the children of God receive favors from the hands of good men, they bless God, not only for providing the good things, but also for putting it into

the hearts of their benefactors, to bestow them. "Thanks be to God," said Paul, "who put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you." And just so the pious Ezra felt, in view of a favor bestowed by a graceless man: "Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart." Now if God does not as completely rule the hearts of graceless men, as He does the hearts of his children, then He is not to be so completely acknowledged in the favors received from their hands: But to diminish aught of the tribute of gratitude due to the supreme Lord, on account of the want of benevolence in them who are his instruments in bestowing the favors, is contrary to all the filial affections of the children of God.

Secondly. A belief in this doctrine, is necessary to an understanding and hearty submission to those afflictions, which come immediately from the hand of the wicked. If the Lord does not govern the hearts of wicked men—if He does not cause every volition of their hearts, then all evil which we suffer from their hands, is not *divine chastening*, and is not to be submitted to as His rod. It is the very nature of that piety which is in the hearts of the godly, to lead them to see the hand of their heavenly Father in all their afflictions. If David had not believed that a holy God governed, and controlled the hearts of wicked men, he could not consistently have felt, and spoken, as he did, under the grievous cursing of that wicked Benjamite. He was still and opened not his mouth, because he saw, that Shimei was the Lord's rod to chasten him for his sins. Therefore he said, *Let him alone, and let him curse: for the Lord hath bidden him.* [2 Sam. xvi. 11.] There are no doubt times, when all the friends of God have similar feelings under similar trials. They feel as if they could submit to the most bitter reproaches and revilings, because they are convinced that they richly deserve such chastenings from their Father who is in heaven; and His hand is discerned as clearly, as if no other hand were employed. But if this doctrine of a divine agency in producing the actions of wicked men, were to be given up, there would not be any sufficient foundation, on which to build holy and sweet submission to God under such trials.

Thirdly. All the friends of God are pleased with the idea, that He should have the most *universal* and *uncontrolled* dominion over the creation. "Absolute sovereignty," said the great and pious *Edwards*, "is what I love to ascribe to God." The great apostle of the Gentiles seemed to be delighted with this, when, in view of the various dispensations of Providence, both in hardening and softening, in showing "mercy" and "severity;" he exclaimed, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his ways, and his judgments past finding out!——For *of* Him, and *through* Him, and *to* him are all things." Rom. xi. 33—36. Jesus Christ manifested a delight in the same thing when he

" rejoiced in the spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes ; even so, Father, for it seemed good in thy sight." Luke x. 21. He appeared to be delighted with the thought that his Father was *Lord* of heaven and earth, and that He exercised an uncontrollable dominion over such different characters, as are here denominated "the wise and prudent," and the " babes."

If the doctrine, which has been advocated in this discourse, is true, we can see that there is nothing to obstruct the most unlimited and universal sovereignty of Jehovah. We shall be agreed in our belief, that He can do his pleasure in the *material* system; so that none can stay his hand. And many are willing to advance further, and ascribe to Him the complete dominion of *heaven*, and also of *godly* men on earth, as far as He shall please to exert his power to sanctify them ; but they think it is extending the matter too far, to suppose that this unlimited dominion extends to *wicked men* and *devils*. Here, they suppose, that the most which the Supreme Agent can do, is to restrain and set bounds to their rage. But how desirable it must appear to all the friends of God, that He should possess as complete management of the hearts of his enemies, as of the hearts of his friends. Then He can do *all* His pleasure : He can execute all His decrees, and none can hinder him : He can " work *all things* after the counsel of his *own will*."

All the friends of God are prepared to rejoice in the thought; that all things are in His hand, even the hearts of his enemies, (if this can be,) and the glory of his holiness not be eclipsed or obscured by it. And is it not evidently from a misconception of the subject, that this view of the universal agency of God has ever been thought to obscure his holiness? Are we not prepared to be reconciled to the idea of God's influencing wicked men, as He did the king of Persia, to *benefit his church*? Now, if we can be reconciled to the idea, that God is the cause of those sinful exercises, the good effect of which *immediately follows*, then certainly no reason can be given why we should not be reconciled to His agency in those, where the good effect is *more remote*. Are we not then prepared to be reconciled to the agency of God through heaven, earth, and hell ? for we may rest assured, that all the wickedness of men and devils, will in the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob, be made to promote the divine glory, and also to further the perfection and blessedness of the kingdom of Christ.

Let me hope, that the reader will seek to *understand* the subject to which he has now been attending, and that he will very carefully and devoutly compare what he here finds, with the oracles of God. Should any reader, whose mind has labored on this subject, be assisted in correcting his mistakes, and in obtaining more exalted views of the unlimited and universal dominion of the Most High, let him ascribe thanksgiving and praise to his holy name. Amen.

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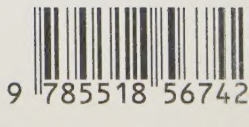

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